

Advaita at Kovalam

2002



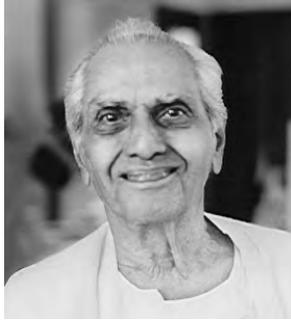
Advaita at Kovalam

2002

Ramesh S. Balsekar

In honour of Ramesh's visit to
Kovalam in November 2002

THANK YOU GURU

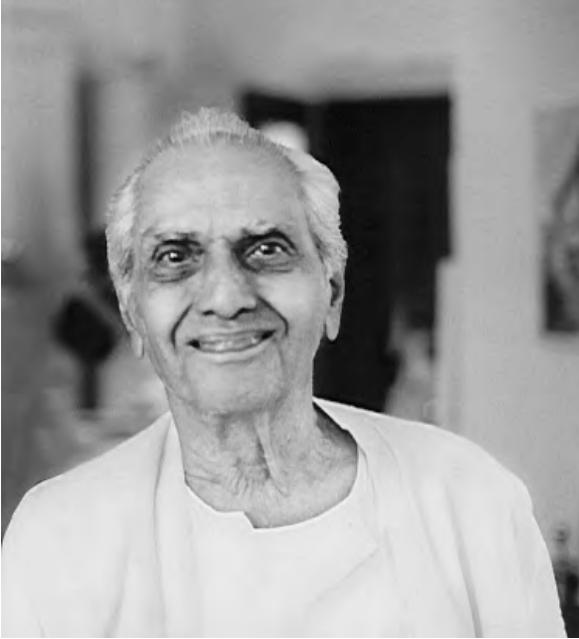


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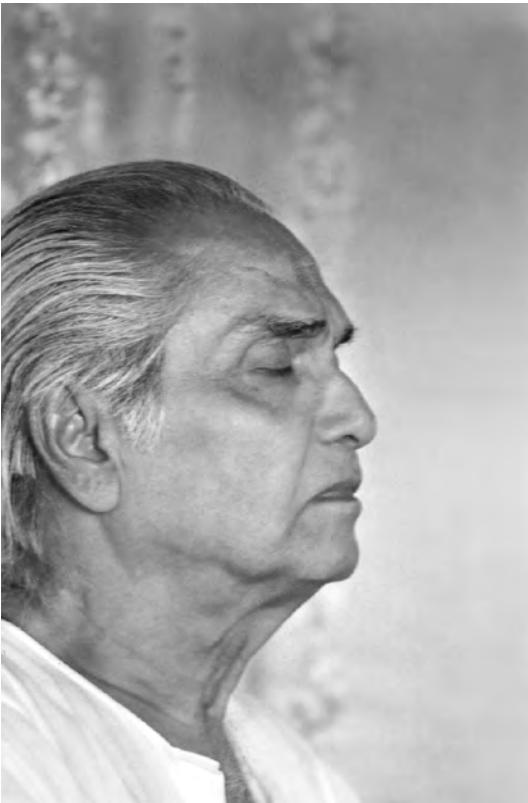
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RAMESH IN SCHERMAU 2000



RAMESH IN KOVALAM 1988



RAMESH IN JOSHUA TREE 1987



KOVALAM BEACH



KOVALAM BEACH

FOREWORD

This book has been an ongoing process that started in 1989 and had several times been declared complete and finished. The man behind this project thought himself unworthy to be mentioned as editor and author and never wanted his name to be used. Shy to the point of being unsociable, as he has said himself, he never wanted to be mentioned by name.

I first met this non-existing entity in the California desert at Joshua Tree, a retreat center about 100 miles southeast of Los Angeles, in September 1987. It was Ramesh's first trip as teacher to the West, and after a series of daily talks in L.A., he also gave a two-week Seminar in Joshua. The participants were staying in old caravans that were splattered around the Center. Ben and I shared a trailer and although he is almost twenty years older than I, we immediately took to each other. The unifying experience was the book, *I Am That*, the book about talks with Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj. For both of us it had been the opening door to Ramesh's teaching. This man had after a long search and burning up a few Gurus on the way, finally found in Ramesh his real teacher.

Upon Ramesh's returning home after the seminar, he and Ben entered into a correspondence. Ben was so moved by Ramesh's letters that he transcribed them onto word-processor data discs from which he printed them out in the form of a booklet, which allowed him to keep this personalized form of the teaching always conveniently accessible.

When Ramesh returned to the States the next year, he gave him a copy of the book (which had the title of "From Consciousness to Consciousness") as an expression of his gratitude and love for the Teaching and for Ramesh.

Ramesh saw in this little book a potential that could also profit other seekers, so he suggested that it be published. The first edition came out in 1988 and a second one in 1989. This book was translated into German and published in 1994 by Alf Lüchow Verlag.

The next book, Consciousness Writes, started with the letters of my friends to Ramesh and Ramesh's replies, and soon grew into a real book that included his own expoundings on the Teaching and many more letters of other seekers. In the meantime, about ten more editions with different letters have been privately published, including one edition that was distributed to the participants of the Kovalam Seminar in 1993, and another, much larger edition, for the 1995 Seminar, and yet another edition for the first Seminar in Schermau in 1998.

Although he had on several occasions declared that the project was finally complete, he always found more interesting material, which was reason enough for another final draft.

It became a standing joke between Ramesh and me: "Ah, the next final draft!"

When totally unexpected in July 2001 just after the last Seminar in Schermau there was a chance of another Seminar in Kovalam, I asked him to put something together from his treasure chest of material that we could, as usual, hand out to the participants of the Seminar. And so "Advaita at Kovalam" was born.

On several occasions I had tried to persuade him to reveal his identity, but he had always declined. In June 2002 we had a long conversation on the phone. Maybe my argument that this might really be the 'final draft', the last edition, was my winning argument and Ben finally gave in.

It gives me the chance to thank Ben Pierce for his labor of Love. The fact that the 'final draft' of these letters and other forms of communication between the Guru and his disciples is about Kovalam, is an aspect that warms my heart, as I have a very long standing and deep connection with this place.

Thank You Ben

Heiner Siegelmann, June 2002

P.S.

I would also like to thank Franz M. Huber, who did the processing and scanning of this material to provide the dummy that was needed for the printer. Without his total dedication to produce the best possible quality we would have had a simple xeroxed, spiralbound version and not a beautiful book. My heartfelt thanks to him for being what he is.

Also my thanks to Chantal, another great source of inspiration for opening up my heart and to see more of my true self.

P.P.S.

In July 2002 Ben started work on this manuscript that should now turn out to be a beautiful book, and not, as intended, just a simple Xerox copy. This project has gone through many stages over the last 14 years and has now reached, in its present form, a worthy culmination.

Maybe if I had known what I was getting myself into, I might have never started it. When I talked to Ben on the phone about the big workload and all the problems, he took it upon himself to be the culprit to put me in this situation. He gave me the appropriate quote from Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy (Dick und Doof) that we had used before to blame each other: "That's another fine mess You got me into." It's a joke he had shared with Ramesh in 1987 when he took Ramesh out for dinner to give him relief from an overload of work. Ben was very surprised that Ramesh picked up on the joke, as he had seen and liked very much the films of these two lunatics.

To have it on a datadisc for printing, we had to scan the whole stuff and reduce it in size. That's when we ran into all kind of problems: lot's of misspellings, wrong typesetting and God knows what. Franz did all the work on the computer – what was a lot – and I would read the stuff again and again and again....

Chantal did one last proof-reading, and I can only hope that we have now a near-perfect manuscript! Two days before leaving for India it is finally finished, and the disc safely in my carry-on. Now I am faced with the last obstacle – to have it printed in Tiruvananthapuram within 10 days.....

October 15, 2002

EDITOR'S NOTE

First, to define the title of the book:

Advaita

Non-dualism; no otherness; the doctrine of monism which contends that only Consciousness has existence and all phenomenal existence is illusion.

Kovalam (accent on first syllable) Beach

-The site in Kerala state, South India, where Ramesh has held seminars usually from 12 to 14 days in length, occurring sometime during February, March or April, in the years 1988, 1989, 1990, 1993, 1994 and 1995.

This book is about the presentation of the Teaching of Advaita during that remarkable series of Kovalam seminars, the presenter being Ramesh S. Balsekar, Advaitic Guru, born in Bombay, educated in the West, former banker. His extensive knowledge of Western cultural values gives him a deep understanding of the particular nature of the apparent problems experienced in Western societies. His consequent capacity to communicate the Teaching in terms that are familiar and readily understood is greatly appreciated by his Western disciples, most of whom are from Germany and the United States.

In July 2001 a letter was received from Heiner Siegelmann, the one primarily responsible for instituting and organizing the Kovalam seminars. Because the site at which the seminars had been convening was to become unavailable, the last one occurred in 1995. And there was no expectation that there would ever be anymore seminars at Kovalam. But Heiner's letter indicated that there was a possibility that the Rockholm Hotel at Kovalam Beach might become available again, and if that should happen, he asked if it would be possible to assemble some pertinent reading material to be printed for distribution to the participants.

The idea was so appealing - that work on what was intended to be but a small booklet - began immediately as a sort of experiment to see what might develop. Within a few days came an intention to finish this project regardless of whether or not there would be another seminar.

The result is what has now become a book which is essentially a documented history of the Kovalam Seminars. There are four modes of that documentation: letters; notes; tapes; and books. The material in each of the four chapters is taken from a different one of the four modes. It will be noted that these chapters are preceded and followed by a number of sections, such as Foreword, Prologue, Epilogue, Glossary, and Bibliography that present material that has been selected to enhance the Reader's understanding and appreciation of the essential nature of the Guru and Advaita, and the role of the Seminars in the transmission of the Teaching.

The thirteen photographs appearing herein provide a bit of pictorial documentation of some of the persons and places associated with the Kovalam Seminars.

Many thanks to Heiner Siegelman, Mary Ciofalo, and Henry Swift for making their letters available for publication and also for serving as proof readers. There is much love and gratitude for Elaine Pierce, who made many significant improvements in the text. And a very special thanks to Mary for providing so much detailed information in the form of oral and written accounts, tapes and photographs of this extraordinary series of seminars on Advaita. And also, a very special thanks to Heiner, who came up with the idea in the first place, and then guided it through its development, and finally assumed the responsibility for its publication.

Opinions of those who have attended the Kovalam seminars have often characterized them as being beneficial spiritually, psychologically, and even physiologically, as well as being just downright enjoyable.

The Kovalam Seminars were certainly a very memorable phenomenon, through which the Guru was able to bring to many eager seekers the most important message of life:

CONSCIOUSNESS IS ALL THERE IS

For those of us who have known Ramesh, this book is not only a record of some of the many beautiful happenings that occurred during that "blessed" series of seminars, but it is also an expression of our gratitude for and to the Guru.

PROLOGUE

KOVALAM - FROM 1988 TO 2002

HEINER SIEGELMANN

I had traveled all over Southeast Asia, but had deliberately avoided India for the usual reasons: the unbeatable combination of dirt, utter poverty, unreliability, corruption, etc. But when India became almost the only spot on the map of Asia that I hadn't visited, I finally gave in and toured South India in '84 for three weeks. The trip ended in Kovalam, at the Rockholm hotel. The first time I entered the hotel and walked down the stairs to the palm-fringed terrace, I fell in love with the place. The constant sound of the waves crashing on the big boulder on which the hotel sits, the timeless atmosphere of the place, the big airy rooms and the good food made it instantly one of my favorite hotels.

But I had no intention to return to India, until February '86 when I came to see Ramesh for the first time. After that fatal meeting, India became my second home. I returned to Bombay about every three months and grilled Ramesh with my questions for about ten days on each visit, and then went back to the Rockholm to digest his answers. It was the perfect place for that pursuit, and I began to understand the well-known Kovalam mantra amongst travelers: "I'm leaving tomorrow," repeated day after day. I, too, succumbed to the pace of Kovalam and always stayed much longer than planned.

During my fourth visit to Ramesh, I met Henry Denison, a 78-year-old American who had traveled the world for more than 25 years in search of a Guru. His search ended when he found Ramesh. Henry asked Ramesh if he would come to the States to give some talks. Ramesh didn't like the idea, but Henry was persistent, and Ramesh finally agreed when Henry presented him with a paid, round-trip ticket to Los Angeles. I accompanied Ramesh for the two and a half months he was in California. Towards the end of his trip at the retreat in the desert at Joshua Tree, the idea to have a two-week seminar in Kovalam in April '88 began to shape up. Mary Ciofalo and a friend of hers, who both attended the Joshua Tree retreat, were the first ones to sign up. After that seminar Mary became my partner in enrolling people for all further seminars in Kovalam and Germany, and also a very good friend.

I had become stung by the Advaita bug one year before I met Ramesh. A good friend of mine from Los Angeles, Peter Roe, gave me Nisargadatta's book, "I Am That". Until I read that book, I had only bad things to say about "this spiritual crap". Since I hardly knew anyone interested in "this crap," there was no way for me to find thirty people to come for two weeks to Kovalam to meet this Guru, who was virtually unknown in the West. But another good friend, Henning von der Osten, knew enough people who were interested. Finally, on Easter '88, I found myself waiting in the middle of the night at the Bombay airport for 33 spiritual seekers to arrive. I was very, very nervous and I wasn't sure I hadn't taken on too big a job.

But the seminar went wonderfully. It was easy and relaxed. People eagerly absorbed Ramesh's words and presence and also enjoyed the hotel, the food, the beach and ocean, and the beautiful countryside. Ramesh wrote in one of his letters, "I must say that the group members seemed to have a thoroughly good time, a lot of fun. I could see from the balcony of our room (Ramesh's wife, Sharda, accompanied him at the first seminar),

the group members on the beach and in the ocean from 7 A.M. 'til late in the night taking advantage of the surroundings." By the time the seminar was finished, it was clear that there would be more, and I booked the Rockholm for March '89. It was there at the second seminar that I met Erika and fell in love. Together we set the stage for the talks in March '90.

By that time Ramesh was going every year to the States, including Hawaii, and he slowly grew tired of too much travel. He traveled to the States for the last time in '92.

In the spring of '92, Erika and I went to Auroville* for two months, intending to settle there. But we found that it was not the place where we would like to live. We spent the next two weeks in Kovalam, and then two weeks with Ramesh. Somehow, we got to talking to Ramesh about Kovalam, and how it might be a place where we would like to live. Then Ramesh unexpectedly said to us, "Why not have another seminar in Kovalam?"

The very next day we were on the plane back to Kovalam. We rented all the rooms at the Rockholm, some more at the Palma Nova (now the Palmshore hotel) and we also wanted the two rooms at the Aparna hotel situated behind the Rockholm, but higher up. We sat in front of these two ground floor rooms and talked to the owner. He offered us six more rooms which he would have finished building in time for the seminar on March 28th, 1993. Erika and I exchanged just one look, and then I asked Chandra, the owner, if he would sell us the top floor. We struck the deal there and then. Building work would start in July, which would give us both nine months to finish our flat and his six rooms.

To build this flat to my standards in India almost proved too much for me. I came close to death as a result of a combination of physical exhaustion, poisoning from highly toxic paints, and stress. The first participants, who arrived a couple of days before the seminar started, helped us finish the last touches. On the evening of the 27th of March, we sat for the first time in our wonderful lookout high above the ocean. The next day the fourth seminar started.

By that time Kovalam had been discovered by English charter companies, and the place started to change. The Rockholm, like many other hotels, had given the charters half their rooms for the whole season. That was clearly the end of any kind of seminar in Kovalam. The last Kovalam seminar was filled to capacity with 85 people attending, almost tripling in size from the first one. We thought this was also the last seminar anywhere, but we were wrong. Ramesh gave talks for four more years in Scherchau, Germany, from 1998 to 2001.

After the last seminar in June 2001, nobody had any doubt that this really was the end of Ramesh's travels. The long trip to Germany was too exhausting for him. Now the only way to see, hear, and be with him was to travel to his home in Bombay, and attend the morning talks there.

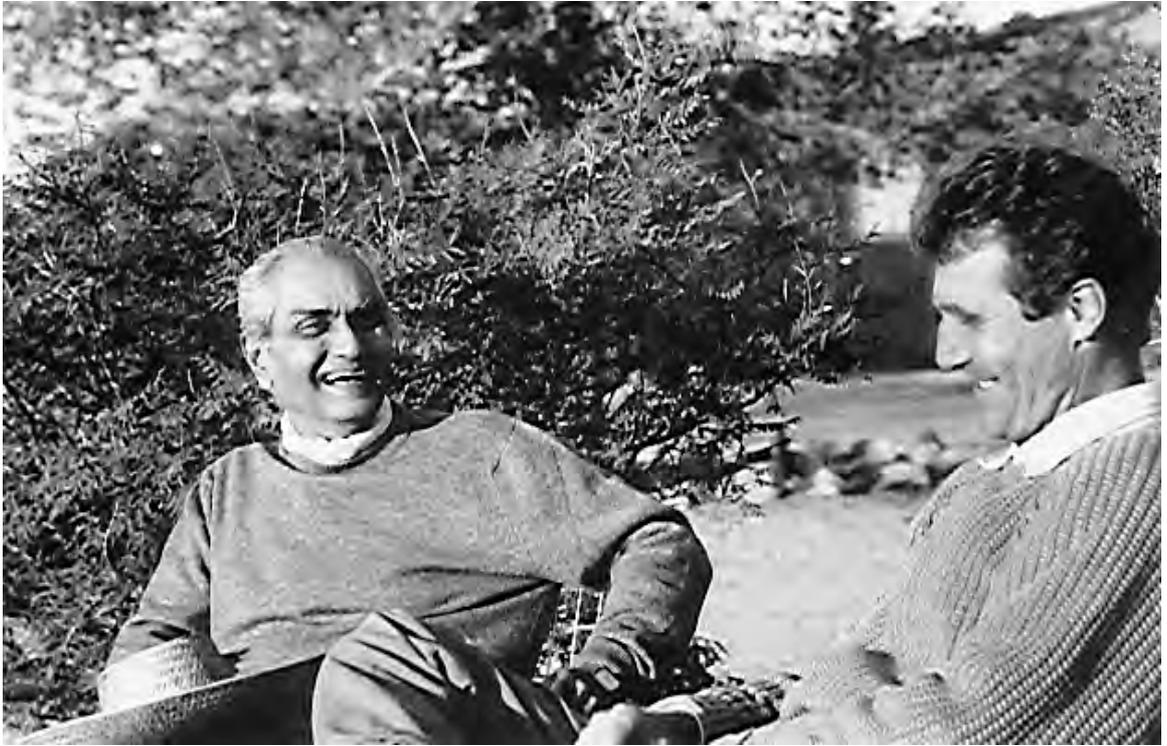
* (a spiritual community in the South of India)

Three weeks after Ramesh returned home from the last seminar in Germany, I got a phone call from Roger, the owner of the Rockholm Hotel. He told me that the charters were pulling out, and he was open to business as usual. A few minutes later I rang Ramesh and asked him what he thought of doing another seminar in Kovalam. His reply was clear and short, "Why not?" So December 2002 is the most probable date for a last series of talks in Kovalam.

As soon as the dates are confirmed, we will announce all the details for signing up.

www.ramesh-balsekar.com

www.advaita.org



RAMESH AND HEINER AT JOSHUA 1987



HEINER 2001

LETTERS

INTRODUCTION

Over the years Ramesh's letters have told about the activities of the groups, usually numbering more than thirty, in attendance at the eight annual springtime seminars (at Kovalam Beach in South India in the years 1988-1990, 1993-1995, and at Maui in Hawaii in 1991 and 1992). The most detailed of such reports are those concerning the first Kovalam seminar, represented here by excerpts taken from four letters written to some of his regular correspondents. This begins the presentation of the letters.

(Incidentally, it should be noted that what was referred to as a "retreat" in the early years somehow came to be called a "seminar" in the later years.)

And some of those who attended the seminars also wrote letters about their experiences at these events. So, next are letters that document how Mary Ciofalo happened to become one of the two Americans who attended the first seminar, and how it, and the subsequent seminars, had a profound effect on her spiritual as well as her professional life. And she also provides a very interesting perspective on the final Kovalam Seminar. Being one of the few who attended every seminar, her comments are based on long-term experience with this form of Ramesh's expression of the teaching.

As noted, the annual seminar was held at Kovalam for three years, followed by a gap of two years, which was followed by another three years at Kovalam and during that two-year gap, seminars were being held in Maui, Hawaii.

So, although the seminars were presented annually for eight years, the ones at Maui obviously cannot be referred to with the word "Kovalam." And yet they were certainly part of that particular series. Therefore it is considered appropriate to have a "Maui representation" included here. A very interesting, and the best documented account is that of Henry Swift, which follows Mary's letters.

Next, there is a letter written by Ramesh to Jo, who had attended seminars at both Kovalam and Maui.

Finally, there are letters from Heiner's correspondence.

RAMESH

FROM RAMESH TO THREE CORRESPONDENTS

May 24, 1988

From March 27 to April 10, I had a group of German visitors at a place called Kovalam Beach (Southernmost tip of the country). It was a very good group, and they had done their homework. It was a physically exhausting schedule, but I was very happy to have talks with them. They also enjoyed their beach and the sun and the warm ocean. And it was also a good retreat for me too!

May 2, 1988

Heiner, whom you probably met at the talks in L.A. last September, had arranged a twelve-day spiritual retreat-cum-holiday for a German group of about 32 people (two American young ladies, who were from San Francisco, joined the group) at Kovalam Beach, a holiday resort almost at the southern tip of India. The ocean was warm, and the small but clean and comfortable hotel was exclusively booked for the group, with the result that when there were no talks, there was always a large group on the sands or in the ocean at all times of the day - and the moonlit nights! The hotel is situated right on the beach, and the location somehow has managed a sort of private beach that could be reached through a small gate in the rear of the hotel.

The group was typically German: intense, deeply interested in the subject, with their homework well prepared. The reaction in the beginning was, of course, strong resistance to what I had to say. And I didn't help matters by spontaneously coming out at the very first talk that I would welcome resistance, but that, while I was quite aware of the German character (which in general I greatly admire), it was not my intention to cater to what the group might want and expect from me. All I asked for was that they give their open and full attention to what I had to say - and then let the chips fall where they may!

It was rather interesting that on the very first day, a young man (around 30 years of age) came out with the statement that he did not have the feeling that he was in the presence of Truth, and that he doubted that "I" was an "enlightened being." I couldn't help laughing aloud. I told him that I was sorry that he was disappointed, but since I didn't expect that Heiner would let him have his money back, he might as well relax and listen to what I had to say. Perhaps soon, I said, he might have a clearer idea of what "he" is, what "I" am, and what Truth is. On the third day, something I said touched him so deeply that he put up his hand to ask a question. When I looked at him and smiled, he suddenly broke out into violent, uncontrollable sobbing which clearly affected several others.

All in all, it was on the whole a most interesting experience of one homogeneous group listening to a series of talks. There were at least seven or eight "transformations" of some sort - one or two very deep indeed - which provided the answer to why I happened to be at that place at that time

April 27, 1988

The Rockholm hotel is situated on the beach, and most of the rooms faced the ocean. Heiner had booked the entire small hotel which housed the entire group. It was an interesting experience for me to have an ethnic group for 12 days, and watch their reactions. I was aware that it was a homogeneous group inasmuch as they were lead by a man called Henning (who was also present) who was a psychotherapist and also a sort of healer. By the same token, they all had a certain basic grounding in the subject about which I was to talk. Somehow I felt sure that it would be a very "successful" series of talks.

Something made me say, almost at the start, that I was aware of the nature of the average successful German as the "achiever," and knew what he would like to hear, but I was not there to cater to their wishes and whims. I said that what I propounded would not be acceptable to them in the beginning, but appealed to them that, in their own interests,

they should listen to me with an open mind, giving their undivided attention to what I wanted to say - instead of shutting their minds totally without giving me, and themselves, a fair chance. I also promised them that if they did listen to me with an open mind, what they would receive was something totally new and quite priceless. The immediate effect was a blending of shock, resentment, hope, greed. But from then on, the attention was total and concentrated, questions - intelligent questions - following one another in rapid staccato succession.

From the very third day there was an extremely satisfied smile on Heiner's face as he realized what a tremendous impression the TRUTH was making not only in the group as a whole, but, more particularly, on Henning himself and his very intelligent wife (and able assistant) Elke. And it was gratifying to see the members of the group vying with each other to capture the front seats: it was almost embarrassing to find that almost the entire group was assembled half an hour before the scheduled time.

It was an extremely strenuous working day for me - 2 to 2 1/2 hours in the morning, 3 hours in the afternoon for four personal interviews, and 1 to 1 1/2 hours after dinner. But the dedication of the group made it a very satisfying retreat!

I must say that the group members seemed to have a thoroughly good time, a lot of fun. I didn't know it but it seems the ocean in California and in Europe is usually very cold, and only the braver ones go into the water for a swim. The ocean at Kovalam Beach was beautifully warm, and Sharda and I could see, from the balcony of our room, the group members on the beach and in the ocean from 7 A.M. till late in the night taking advantage of the surroundings, although it was quite warm, with temperatures well in the eighties.

The group members were thinking of forming another group for Christmas, but the hotel was already fully booked by another group.

By the time the retreat was over, there was no resistance left at all as far as the group as a whole was concerned. And the fact that there was deep transformation in at least 5 or 6 cases, which was distinctly noticeable, impressed the whole group so much that several members "booked" themselves with Heiner whenever he could arrange a similar retreat in the future.

May 25, 1988

I am glad you liked the report of the retreat of the German group.

There was one particular lady - the wife of the man who actively helped Heiner to get the group together, called Henning who, I think, got the little push she needed. During the personal interview, Elke, normally a very quiet person, suddenly started talking, at a certain stage, with such conviction and feeling that I knew she had responded to the unseen push. Words came out like a torrent, and her husband was aghast when she spontaneously remarked that she hadn't ever realized how simple the whole matter was, that there really is no chase or goal to be achieved, and finally that she would willingly give whatever she had at that moment received from me to someone who wanted it desperately (obviously meaning her husband who was then sitting at her side) but that

there really was nothing to give and no one to give it to! The husband just looked at me with tears in his eyes as Elke suddenly lowered her chin and sat silent.

At the talk the next morning, someone brought up the point about the understanding being so elusive, and Elke suddenly came out with the answer, "What does it matter? Nothing matters!" Everyone was astonished at the totally unexpected answer from a totally unexpected source, and the beauty of the incident was that instead of being embarrassed (as I expect the others thought), she gave me a bright smile, closed her eyes and sat silent, as her husband quietly slipped her hand between his own.

And, additionally, Elke's spontaneous remarks had a peculiarly electric effect because, as a result of participating in some therapy session some time ago when she had to scream every morning for several days, she had suddenly lost her voice, and recovered it after a time only as a sort of whisper and her remarks had come as a kind of exaggerated hoarse whisper in a burst of energy. My own reaction was to point a finger with my arm extended and say, "Precisely so, my dear Elke." When there is realization that all there is, is Consciousness, let the "me" in its death throes create all the movements therein that it wants. What does it really matter? There is a deep understanding that there is really no "me" to find any reality as some object other than itself: Consciousness will drop off its identification, and find its own universality. During this process of disidentification, let there be movements and oscillations in the mind - why bother and thereby keep the "me" alive?!

MARY**FROM MARY TO A FRIEND**

October 22, 1994

I first met Ramesh in Joshua Tree, California, in October of 1987. A friend of mine, who had visited Nisargadatta Maharaj in India and remembered Ramesh as Maharaj's translator, thought I might be interested and invited me to accompany her. I went, more to spend time with her than out of any particular desire to meet this man. I knew nothing of Advaita, and nothing of Maharaj, but I had heard the story of Ramana Maharshi as a revered holy man in India. However, I had always been a seeker, driven by something deep inside, to search for some form of meaning outside myself. Those investigations had been mostly in psychic and psychological areas. Nothing had been very satisfying. In short, I was ripe.

When I look back on those days with Ramesh in the California desert, I can see my mind had great difficulty with what he was saying; but my heart recognized that here it could come home. I was puzzled by his concepts which were new to me, and attracted by his presence. I was not bored. I grew more and more interested as I watched others and listened to their questions. The time I spent with Ramesh in personal interviews cemented some connection that grew stronger, although I can't recall much of what I said or asked. A good example of this paradox was visible in the expressive type of painting I did at the time. Between talks I painted a picture of the inside of myself. All my inner nerves were on fire, and I was being kissed by a gigantic spirit fish. I didn't understand this painting until years later. It was prophetic of what was happening quietly, at an unconscious level, deep inside me.

I spent the last \$300 I had signing up for the first two-week seminar of talks Ramesh was giving in India a few months later. I didn't know why I did that; I couldn't explain to friends, much less to myself, what it was that I was interested in, just that I was. But, as Ramesh says, my head was in the tiger's mouth, and there was nothing I could do. He assured me that, despite the fact that I might not understand everything, understanding was happening. I think I am good proof of that process.

I went to India for the seminar, and each year following. I didn't think much about the teaching while I was away. Occasionally I read Ramesh's books, but would steep myself in his presence and his written words in India. Each year I could see the understanding deepened, and this was encouraging. I wrote perhaps a dozen letters to Ramesh, more to keep a connection going than to address questions to him. I don't think I'm much of a Jnani person, I have more of a Bhakti nature, and it has been helpful to follow this path to deeper understanding. As Ramesh says, eventually the Jnana and the Bhakti paths merge. A friend also told me that sometimes love enters through the back door. There are times when my mind follows keenly what Ramesh is saying (this has become more frequent in recent years), and there are times when I just sit in his presence amidst a sea of gratitude and tears. There are also times when I wonder why I am there. I learn as much from the questions of others as I do from my own questions. I notice what has become silenced and known in myself, and where confusion or difficulty with the understanding still remains. I went through a period of thinking I knew it all, but

fortunately that has mostly passed. I seldom ask questions now, and the yearning for enlightenment has almost died away. No longer do I think there's something wrong with me, my understanding and devotion, because of this quietness.

Professionally I am a psychotherapist, and it is in my work that I can track the deepening of the teaching. I find myself automatically translating some of Ramesh's concepts into ideas my clients can use. Last year I wrote a letter to Ramesh when I was at the seminar, and Ramesh invited me to talk about this with other participants. I thought I would share this letter here.

FROM MARY TO RAMESH

February 9, 1993 (Kovalam)

It is very good to be with you again and in this "spiritual family." It has been good to be in India and Maui at these last five seminars. Each year I feel the understanding has deepened, not, as you have often said, through any conscious effort on my part, but effortlessly in some silent place in my being. This year I have few questions and feel somewhat shy and quiet at the talks, and yet I listen intently and feel "reminded" again and again of what is being understood. The understanding does not yet have constancy or full clarity, and still I have no questions. So I feel acceptance of where I am and listen quietly with gratitude. What I find myself thinking about, again this year, is the interface of this understanding with the psychotherapy I do. Again and again my thoughts turn to the question: "How can this understanding be helpful to my clients through the attitudes and approaches I use with them?" I wonder if other therapists and healers in the seminar have similar questions.

I use some of the concepts you talk about in my work. They are only concepts on the road to full understanding, and yet some of them have been helpful to people who are seeking psychological relief in their lives. I thought I would mention some of them. They might be helpful to bring up later in the seminar, when the initial questions have quieted down.

1. Witnessing.

I know that true witnessing just "happens", but the attitude or habit of witnessing seems to be able to be taught to those who are ready. Pain and distress can sometimes turn people into ready students! The teaching is simple. Just practicing with clients the process of becoming an observer of themselves and their distress when they are overwhelmed, I say to them, "When you observe your self like this, the pain and distress will still be there, but the part of you that observes will not be involved; it is, instead, busy observing; and with practice this observing part seems to get larger, and larger so that less and less of you is distressed."

2. Distancing.

This is taken from my understanding of the phrase, "it is all happening now." I ask people to sit with their problem, and their unhappiness about it. This is done after there has been compassionate listening. When it feels timely, I ask them to widen their view, like panning back with a camera, to include more and more of the external situation - the placement of this event in their family, in their culture, in time and history, and from

more and more distance. When people do this, they can achieve some lessening of their misery through a sense of perspective.

3. I am not the doer; doing happens through me.

Clients who have done some spiritual work can grasp this concept and get relief through this realization. (Those who can't are affronted by this approach.) I have watched several people apply this understanding to those who've caused them pain. By doing so, they have been able to detach from the anger, resentment, and vengeance they feel toward those who've victimized them. It is understood that the victimizer also could not do otherwise. This understanding relieves the sense of "I alone was helpless." But, it must be handled delicately in a therapeutic setting, the receptivity of the client tested before it is used.

4. Humor and teaching stories.

I have used some of the teaching stories you have told in the seminars. Once more I have tried to be attuned to the client's receptivity. Sometimes the combination of stories and humor have been helpful - occasionally very helpful. The laughter at one's self and one's predicament when shared with another, provides a lightening of perspective.

5. De-emphasizing the ego.

One of the pitfalls in psychotherapy is that the therapeutic process and its necessary focus on the self, with its distress can lead to constant psychological investigation. It can become a way of life, instead of a useful tool. People can spend too much time investigating and "efforting" about each little aspect of themselves. I tell clients at the start, we can get them to a place where this kind of investigation is no longer necessary and life can "just happen" again.

6. Mystery.

I also emphasize that much change "just happens" and is often mysterious and to look for these changes and accept the mystery in them.

These are a few of the concepts, and ways of applying them, that I've worked with as a result of the teaching. Using these concepts has also "just happened" over time and seems connected to my speciality in working with people who've undergone severe trauma, either repetitious abuse in childhood, or a severe blow occurring later in life. My thinking goes like this. Trauma can be so overwhelming that the usual anchors to identity and a sense of "normality" are temporarily or permanently shattered. The re-formation work a person undergoes after trauma involves one of several possibilities. Either they return to a more "normal" experience of self, or a maladapted experience of self where they perceive themselves as damaged or diminished in some way.

I've also noticed that in some cases experience of trauma contains the possibility of reaching beyond the self to a sense of something more - God, or Supreme Consciousness - in an attempt to answer such questions as: "Why me?"; "Who am I that this should happen to me?"; "Why does life appear so random?"; and "Who or what is in control?" All of these questions are entry points into both spiritual and psychological investigation, if the person is ready and willing - I've been surprised at the number of clients who are. I want to express once again my gratitude for your guidance, patience, clarity and understanding.

March 24, 1995

I hope you are well rested and not too inundated with post-seminar visitors.

Several things struck me about this particular seminar. One is the feeling that I have that this will be the last one. I know that there are no plans to do one next year. Another factor is the sense of your withdrawing, pulling back, and with it a feeling of the teaching being dispersed to those who will continue talking and writing about it in their own ways. There was a sense in the seminar of the 'passing of the guard'. There was also an awareness that never before had I heard you so concise, focused, speaking so clearly. I was amazed again and again at the clarity and simplicity of what was being said. So much healing happened. So much change occurred. Never before at a seminar can I remember following the development of several participants through their questions and responses as clearly as this time.

So I think that transcribing the tapes into a book, perhaps "Ramesh Balsekar at the Last Kovalam Seminar," would be a good idea, and helpful to those who are moved through your books and reading about you.

FROM MARY TO A FRIEND

July 28, 2001

It was good to talk to you. I thought I would write a little bit about Kovalam so you could get a flavor of being there.

We always flew into Trivandrum from Bombay. The flight takes about one and one half hours. (I always thought it comparable to flying from San Francisco to Los Angeles.) Trivandrum is the capital of Kerala state, the Southwestern tip of India.

The state has an interesting history. It is the only (still is?) communist state in India, and it used to be a matriarchy. What I was told was that the lineage was traced through the mother's line, and she was free to choose her mates and let them go at her will. This was a simple procedure of putting her man's sleeping mat outside her door so that the next time he came to visit he got the picture. Her children were the paternal responsibility of her brother, so they always had a constant male adult in their life no matter how many partners her mother had. The people of this region are agrarian, and the crops are tea, tapioca, coconut husk fiber, and fruits. Goats, a new breed of cattle from Switzerland, and pigs are also raised.

Kovalam is a sea resort that has become a popular tourist attraction, smaller and quieter than the bustling tourist attraction of Goa to its north. It is a village with fishing as its main industry. One part of it is quite touristed, with beach shops catering to visitors, and many small hotels. Another part of the village, several miles away, is part Moslem and part Christian (you can see the Mosque from the Rockholm hotel), and it is a small seaport. The ocean in that area is warm, and the beaches make for good swimming. This is what draws the tourists, both Westerners and Indians, visiting on vacation or honeymoon. You can see quite a mix of nations on the beach, including local boys from the village.

During the day a variety of boats are upon the sea. There are modern fishing vessels and there are old-style boats made of two hand-hewn logs roped together and oared by one or two men. At night the sea can be dotted with the light from lamps hung from the boats.

The Rockholm Hotel occupies the choicest site on the beach, on a rocky promontory between the main beach and the smaller private one on the other side. The Rockholm has just a dozen rooms, old style with ceiling fans and windows opening out towards the sea which is just yards away. I used to have room 12, in a separate area above the garage, and went to sleep there with the windows open at night, and rocked by the constant sound of the surf.

The Rockholm terrace is a sandy area set with table and chairs under the palms, where exquisite food is served. The chefs are very good, and also innovative. They have acquired recipes from other nations through associations with people who stay there, as well as cooking the classic dishes of the area. Each year they cooked a Thali meal for our group at the end of the seminar. This is a Southern dish that is served on a banana leaf and eaten with the hands. We were a source of amusement to ourselves and to the staff, which in general is very friendly. So we ate our evening meals outside in this beautiful atmosphere with the surf very close by, often watching the villagers working the rocks for shellfish, or the goats grazing the grass in the crevices of the rocks, and following the course of fishing boats as they moved through the waters. Birds came to our tables for scraps, and at night the stray cats (very Egyptian looking) would come and beg at our feet in the sand.

The roof of the Rockholm is very large, made of red brick, and surrounded by a low wall. It also houses four rooms of the hotel at the back. Heiner, in charge of all the production of the event and quite an innovative being, would have a roofed and sideless pavilion built out of palm fronds and cloth. It was the sun shelter under which we would all gather for the talks. Erika would make beautiful floral arrangements for the backdrop, for the tables, and looping along the edges of the pavilion. The seating was part cushions for those who wanted to sit in a meditative style, and part chairs. The cushions were arranged on a raised dais where Ramesh sat. His talks were amplified because the sound of the sea would cancel out the sound of his voice for those who sat in the back of the pavilion. It was a lovely setting, enchanting, and tropical, but cooled by the ocean breezes. This is where Ramesh would speak each morning and each evening for the duration of the seminars.

I hope this is helpful to sketch out the scene for you.

HENRY**FROM HENRY TO RAMESH**

May 6, 1991

I just talked with you three hours ago. It was so wonderful to hear your voice, and your words - a great relief to me. Now I can relax and just be, as you said. I've had alternating periods of being, and concern: the latter I can now drop. You see, nothing like this has happened to me before! It is unexplored territory, and I get scared a bit. You told me it's all right. So I have nothing I have to do. What a fun prospect!

I shall try to recount the significant events leading up to the event at 11:45 A.M. on April 27th at the Maui retreat.

A problem to me that I had thought about a lot for a year or two is the question of what's real in the world of perception. In other words, understanding the "Rivers-and-Mountains" saying from Buddhist thought. About two nights before I died, I was in a strong discussion about this at the dinner table. And I concluded then that I just could not believe that if I was the only sentient being in the universe, that the world would appear and disappear when I blinked my eyes.

Then I went to bed, and I awakened in the night with the recollection that in Goswami's interpretation of quantum physics, consciousness was inescapably the agent that manifests an electron into the phenomenal world from the never-never land of quantum mechanical "waves."

So if consciousness can manifest an electron into the phenomenal world, as I considered proven by science beyond doubt, it is only a small step to accept that Consciousness can manifest the whole universe. So it was at this point in the middle of the night that I accepted this aspect of this basic Vedantic understanding. But as it later turned out during your last talk, I had not included this body in that universe that was "unreal."

A further realization in the night was that my previous conclusion at the dinner table was the thinking mind's activity, and no matter how many questions it raised that could be resolved with further study and analysis in the future, there would be an endless series of questions that could be raised. So it made sense to quit asking questions now, instead of waiting 'til matters became "more definitive."

The next-to-last evening talk you gave was uneventful to me. I understood clearly all you said. So I concluded that the next morning's final talk also would be of little significance to me, being merely a formality. So I went into that last talk expecting nothing. I think that was important .

In your last talk you stated, as you have so many times before, that the last item to be included in the inventory of what is unreal and merely a distorted perception is the body. The inescapable logic that forced me to include it in the inventory started an avalanche within me. And it may have either started or accelerated when you were overtaken with

emotion when telling of the man, God, and the missing footprints in the sand. My heart poured out to you then.

As you have stated, "it" can only happen when nothing is desired or expected, and the heart is full of love.

Anyway, I could liken the experience to drowning; I couldn't get enough oxygen into my lungs. It was so wonderful for Sharda and you to attend me. I shall never forget Hope's saying to me through the fog, with excitement and love coming through in her voice, "Honey, this is Ramesh behind you," as you pressed down on my shoulders. I love you both.

FROM RAMESH TO HENRY

June 13, 1991

Many thanks for your letter of May 6. I have read it several times, each time I have found it extremely moving. My immediate reaction was not to send any answer at all! You have said everything that needs to be said.

You said that "it" is unexplored territory and therefore, scary. As a Chinese sage has said, "Awakening is always sudden; deliverance may be gradual." So, don't worry about the deliverance.

You are quite right when you say that you have nothing to do - what a fun prospect! It is indeed! Being free from all inhibitions and mental constraints, going with the flow.

Then you said: "I went into that last talk expecting nothing. I think that was important." Indeed, it was most important. The road to failure and frustration is paved with expectations.

I was totally with you when you had that experience of awakening. You are literally right when you say that you "could liken the experience to drowning." You couldn't get enough oxygen into your lungs. You were in continuous racking sobs, and the more anyone tried to console you, the worse it got. How could the others know?!

It was a memorable experience for Sharda. She was quite stunned, and in total empathy with you. Do write whenever you feel like it, but only when you feel like it. No one owes anything to anyone else. It is all from WITHIN.

FROM HENRY TO RAMESH

May 23, 1991

On the personal level, I have relaxed since my phone call to you; I am most grateful for your counsel then. On May 10th I had minor surgery to relieve arthritic pain in the future. I was most interested in witnessing myself during the procedure, which involved a local anesthesia of the arm. I asked to watch the procedure, but was denied permission. But I know I could have watched the cutting with equanimity, as that hand was not me!

Also, I suffered a shock reaction from a chemical-physiological effect of the zylocaine when it entered my bloodstream on loosening of the tourniquet on my arm. I reported this to the anesthesiologist and maintained a dialogue with him throughout a rather tense situation for him. My pulse and blood pressure fell so much that I was close to fainting, but I felt no fear of dying, although I presume that could have happened without the prompt and several remedial actions that were taken. Through it all, an objective stance was in evidence.

I find that I still ponder, elaborate, and develop thoughts; primarily an activity of the thinking mind. But I note it soon and it stops. On the other hand, some of it is productive, problem oriented thinking - sometimes it is hard to discriminate between what part is of the working mind, and what the thinking mind. You said the thinking mind part would drop away, and I think that is happening. Anyway, letting the thinking mind engage in fantasies is surely an OK entertainment, if so viewed - correct?

Our 7 weeks in Mexico will be good for both of us, to integrate and meditate away from so many distractions in our life here.

FROM RAMESH TO HENRY

June 21, 1991

I have received your wonderful letter of May 23. Perhaps the most significant development in life, after the awakening, is that very soon, all doubts will disappear - you will no longer wonder if what "you" are doing is right or wrong, or whether it is the working mind or thinking mind that is in operation. If there is any conceptualizing it will automatically be witnessed and get cut off.

FROM HENRY TO RAMESH

July 22, 1991

I remember just after the experience in Maui, after going outside in the gardens as Sharda recommended to me, how I noted that thoughts immediately got cut off through disinterest, as you had described. It is not that way now. In meditation, which I have done more of lately, sometimes my mind is initially quiet, and a few times I have "come to" with the realization that I had been unaware of environmental sensory experiences, though not asleep. When at our place in Baja, I often went out on the porch, close to the surf, feeling the sun which was only up a half hour or so, and meditated. Wearing shorts only, I could feel the warmth of the sun and perceive sunlight through the eyelids. This was a most favorable environment that fostered enjoyable experiences.

Almost continuously I, to a varying degree, am aware of what the mind is doing, and I am interested in differentiating between operation of the "thinking" and the "working" mind. When I start meditating, it is clear when the thinking mind starts. With the mind initially quiet, but quite soon the thought comes that the mind is quiet now, interrupting the quiet. But I'm learning - for example, experiencing how desire for a quiet mind, disturbs the mind.

So what this boils down to is that it is not clear to me that awakening has occurred; I am only sure that I was "awakened" for a day's time, more or less.

When I called you on the phone, the question of whether I was or wasn't was of great import to me, and you told me "that is wrong, Henry." Since then I have to a great extent relaxed to this: either I am, or I am not and there is not a thing I can do about it either way, so I continue living, and want to see what happens and how it will all come out. I am comforted by your positively stated conviction on the plus side; after all who else would know better. But I am saying that I am not sure. I must remember that deliverance is gradual. I do experience doubts dropping away, as you mentioned. What I am sure of, I am totally sure, it seems.

FROM HENRY TO A FRIEND

May 24, 1998

I have been wanting to share with you a new, recent insight that pertains to the awakening experience that happened to me at the end of a workshop in Hawaii that Ramesh Balsekar held in 1991. This experience included a powerful physiological effect. I have written details about this experience before, but briefly it started when Ramesh said that the last thing we include in our inventory of objects that have a perceived reality was one's own body. I had heard this statement before but had forgotten it. Following this statement and recognizing that it applied to me, it felt like an avalanche started in front of me that would bury me, and I was left gasping for breath for what I suppose was several minutes.

I have always wondered what was different between my experience and similar awakening experiences that I had heard about in others, in which there was no coincident, significant, physiological trauma.

My new insight provides a possible explanation for this mystery. I recently attended a conference in Lisbon where Christina Grof spoke on addiction. She was, an alcohol addict earlier in life and has studied addictions of all sorts since. She said that a person could be addicted to a dogma - a concept new to me. On thinking this over, I realized that for the first more-than-70 years of my life I had been addicted to the scientific dogma that the material world was the only reality.

I was raised in Midwestern US where people take pride in their practicality. In other words, they believe only in what they can see, touch, etc. Then I went to college and through graduate school, learning physics. The metaphysical basis of science is firmly rooted in the reality of the material world.

So the dogma of the primacy of materiality was reinforced by my education. Then I worked in applied physics during my 30-year work career, receiving the awards incident to belonging within the scientific establishment.

Then I started hearing the teachings of Ramesh Balsekar in 1988, at my age of 70. He taught the opposite of the scientific dogma, that consciousness was the root of all being—

that the material world was a secondary reality that arose out of consciousness. He also taught that free will is an illusion, which follows from the primacy of consciousness. These two statements were diametrically opposite to the beliefs I had always deeply held. Thus there was set up within my mind a cognitive dissonance, that ultimately had to find a resolution.

The resolution came suddenly in Hawaii, as described. This, I now see, was a break from my addiction to the idea of the primacy of materiality. As is well known, withdrawal symptoms from addiction result when one is freeing oneself from the addiction. So I now see the powerful physiological symptoms that I experienced as withdrawal symptoms. They were severe because my break from addiction was sudden and "cold turkey", and because my addiction was so deeply in place.

Since that time I have never had a doubt about the primacy of consciousness, as well as the secondary nature of materiality. My life is quite ordinary and proceeds, acting from my mental-physiological center, but with the full knowledge and acceptance that my life is being lived - I am not living it. This awareness is not with me continuously as a conscious matter, but is always there whenever I pause to think about it, as is the awareness that consciousness is all there is.

JO

FROM RAMESH TO JO

September 13, 1993

I have received your letter of August 28. There is no question of not remembering you right away!! Actually, your letter brought up a tremendous wave of sympathy and compassion for you.

It is only when the "me," the ego, is truly in the background that it is possible to live in relative peace without a regular workload. I am, therefore, not surprised that you have been "mired in the black hole of despair and worry about the future."

I am glad to know that you may soon return to work or at least begin some activities that will renew your interest and skills with computers. I am sure that will help a lot.

Yes, there is a retreat in Kovalam Beach next year, and I can understand your sense of urgency where I am concerned. Here again I am constrained to point out that one has no control over what is going to be: let us see what happens.

There is, however, something I should mention to you, which, I think, you have not realized. You talk very eloquently of the times while listening to me when the absorption would become so intense that the words, the world itself, would disappear. Also, you told of the magical moments in Kovalam in 1990, and you then add, "I did become very depressed for no reason right at the end of the retreat."

Jo, in all this thinking, the dominant factor is the thinker, the experiencer, the do-er. There is truly no such character. Unless this is deeply realized, the experiencer will continue to suffer. You say, "Of course, I don't know what will happen. I don't even know for sure why I want to see you again ...". Here is the thinker again thinking from his split-mind of subject-object.

It is my experience, Jo, and my deepest conviction that in the absence of a deep feeling of love and reverence for the Guru, a true awakening is not possible. From personal experience I would say, that when this happens, the disciple is transported to a dimension he never knew existed: he can hardly contain himself; there is not enough he can do for the Guru (whether the Guru needs it or not). Almost invariably, this overpowering feeling results in copious tears, because this feeling is the realization that the Guru is not separate from the disciple, that both are the SELF that is being sought! In other words, this experience is not a personal experience, such as the one that often arises, like the one you mention of the last morning in Maui, as you say, "when my heart broke with love and the tears flowed from my eyes." Actually, this experience could have been one that came about as a reflexive, sympathetic emotion when you witnessed the transformation that happened to Henry. Henry's deep awakening gave rise to several sympathetic reactions - like when someone weeps inconsolably, others begin to weep too, or when one laughs immoderately, others follow! Such reflexive reactions - or even intellectual understandings, however deep they may seem at the time - do not last, and then arises deep frustrations and depressions. I do indeed have tremendous compassion for you.

And all one can do is to immerse oneself deeply in work, and get away from the intellectual pursuit of the spiritual understanding -without even hoping for the best. I really don't know if I am making any sense to you.

You mention your last meeting with me in Bombay. I remember that well because I felt great compassion and sympathy for you. I would rather not mention this, but in view of your very emotional letter, I feel constrained to say this: I had a very distinct feeling that I had failed to bring about in you a really deep feeling for the TEACHING, beyond mere intellectual understanding - the love for the Teaching which in phenomenality takes the form of LOVE for the Guru, wanting to express itself in a demonstrable fashion.

This was not there at your last meeting with me. It was so formal, like a couple of acquaintances saying good-bye. It may well be that your inherently shy nature prevents a deep feeling from penetrating through it. And yet I know that, in spite of my own basically shy nature, when I met Maharaj, a tremendous feeling of LOVE for him arose that morning which just swept aside all shyness. All there was, was this enormous wanting to give - irrespective of the fact that Maharaj needed it or not.

Please believe me, Jo, that I have written all this - it has spontaneously come out - as the result of the deepest compassion that your letter has evoked in me.

Whatever happens in the future, just watch it. Let us see that happens.

HEINER

FROM RAMESH TO HEINER

June 14, 1986

Thank you for your letter of May 28 and for the kind sentiments which you have expressed.

I am so glad your visiting me has been fruitful to a certain extent.

And I am also glad to know that you will be in Bombay again by the end of July. You are most welcome.

Nothing happens but that it was to happen - the supposed individuals are merely characters within that event, any event. There is no one to give credit to or any thing to take credit for - by the some token there is no question of any blame, nor of any failure. At any moment, whatever is manifest is perfect. If this is deeply understood, every moment is welcomed and whatever that moment brings - "good" or "not good" - is accepted without any judgement, without expectation or anxiety. It is this attitude of acceptance which is the real freedom, freedom from expectation and desire, freedom from fear and anxiety. When this is deeply understood, you do not bother about what happens, what thoughts occur or what actions take place, or what emotions arise - they are all witnessed.

Thank you for saying "I love you." What you really mean is: I love everything and everyone. You may not have actually thought so, but THAT IS SO. It is this feeling of LOVE that arises which holds the universe together - it is a spontaneous arising, totally independent of the "instruction" to love thy neighbor. LOVE is not made to order!

I look forward to seeing you too, soon.

FROM HEINER TO RAMESH

May 12, 2002

After so many talks with You in my head, the urge has arisen to write. I took a walk by the river this sunny Sunday afternoon, and again that totally uncaused, unexpected feeling of happiness came over me - nothing ecstatic, but an overwhelming feeling of absence of separation. It usually lasts for some time and then mellows off into a wonderful feeling of acceptance. It gives me great satisfaction and joy to see that there is no hankering after it to have it again. I always have to remember Maharaj's words: "Welcome it when it comes, enjoy it while it lasts, and let it go when it ends." It's the same feeling with my house. So often I think what a wonderful place, what an inspiring and relaxing atmosphere, I love this place, and yet I would be very happy to leave it tomorrow. To enjoy the place is not the least tainted by the fact that I want to leave Schermau.

As I wrote You in my last letter, Your dedication in the Ultimate Understanding has had a certain effect on me and it was very clear when I stayed with You last December, that the last barriers between the Guru and the disciple had been removed. There was no difference anymore, just difference in appearance.

During those 2 1/2 weeks with You, I had a dream: I was sitting in an electric chair and I had to put on all the straps to connect me to the high voltage. Hannes, Indriani's husband, was the executioner who would turn the switch. I was bitching and complaining that I had to do it all myself. There was a huge crowd to watch the execution, but before Hannes could finally turn the switch, I woke up.

In January at Kovalam I had another dream: I watched Your murder. I did not know how you were killed. I witnessed it myself, I saw it on TV, I read it in the paper, people told me about it, I heard it on the radio.....

And I had these two months on my own in Kovalam. And I did the Ayurvedic treatment. I never liked much being on my own for more than a few days, but now I discovered how much I enjoy being by myself, being just with me. I am at peace with myself. There is so much less "What's next?" During the treatment in February my moods would go extremely up and down, my mind was extremely busy, being frustrated at its own furious activity - but somehow I was standing beside myself just watching it all. I never seemed to be really in it. I saw it happening. It was inner turmoil on the surface. The third dream was during the treatment: Wayne was just peacefully dying.

Dr. Sambhu, the ayurvedic doctor, read from my pulse, "the old is fighting with the new."

In March, when I stayed again with you before flying back to Germany, I had the fourth dream: I enter a big ship on which everywhere people are leaning against something to support them while standing up, because they knew, if they should lie down, they would die - and they were all dead.

When I came back to my house in Schermau I started to have similar physical sensations as I have had sometimes before, but much stronger now. These have ranged from extreme sensations in the Third Eye to energy shaking my body so violently that I

could only freeze and scream. Yes, screams of joy, tears of joy, totally out of the blue, a feeling of deep acceptance, no fear at all, flowing with and enjoying life every minute. It can be a flower I look at, peeling an apple, working on the translation, and there is a feeling of oneness, which I would rather describe as a feeling of absence of separation. There is no question of one or many, of love or no love when there is no separation.

These feelings come and go as it pleases them, but the contentedness, the peace, the acceptance is never far away. Deep down there is great calmness, composure. Peace.

Although there is no You or me, there is blissful gratitude for having been given the help to shed the burden of blind ignorance, of pain and suffering. And whatever has and will happen doesn't mean a thing, nothing really matters, because there is no thing.

And I am sure, beyond any doubt, that this is not the total understanding that You talk about, but I am very happy with the understanding that is there, and with the way things have turned out in my life with the amount of understanding there is.

Who cares anyway?!

I love you with every part of my being.

FROM HEINER TO A FRIEND

June 12, 2002

It was a delight to talk with You just a couple of hours ago. As we talked about Kovalam and Your book "Advaita at Kovalam" I was reminded of some facts that connect me so deeply with this place.

As You know, "I Am That" exploded in my head when I read it first in '85, and I know that this book also had a similar effect on You beginning in that very same year. I think it is correct to say that it gave us both enough glimpses to be able to absorb what Ramesh would later teach us. From the beginning "I Am That" was the most treasured book in my whole life. You can tell when you look at my original copy! There has also always been a great feeling of gratitude for what this book has given me and I was very happy when I found a German publisher who was willing to sink some money into this project. Nobody earns from these books. We have split up the original 550 pages into three parts. The first two parts have been on sale since '89, and have never sold more than a thousand copies each per year. Ramesh's books are not doing any better.

Nevertheless, there was a feeling of having paid a pleasant debt when I finished the first part of the translation. At that time there were no plans for a second part, and so it was a pleasant surprise when six years later I got the job of doing the second part. Totally unexpected, I started on the third and final part in December 2001.

After the three Seminars in Kovalam during '88, '89, and '90, I had developed such a strong bond with Kovalam that in '92 I bought a penthouse just behind my favorite hotel: The Rockholm Hotel. The next three Seminars during '93, '94, and '95 I ran as a resident of Kerala out of my home in sky. Spending the winters in my Kovalam home it

became the natural place of all the translation work of Ramesh's books, and now of "I Am That", part III.

Fourteen years of Seminars in Kovalam seem to be coming to an end in November 2002. It was also fourteen years ago that in the Rockholm I started on the first part of "ICH BIN" and in my home, just a stone's throw away, last winter I finished the third part of this treasured collection of hints towards the obvious.

It makes me a little sentimental and all I can say is:
I like His script.

L O V E



THE ROCKHOLM HOTEL



THE ROCKHOLM HOTEL



MARY AND RAMESH AT KOVALAM 1988



MARY AND HEINER IN CALIFORNIA 2001

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

Ramesh's teaching is about one thing, which is often referred to as "non-duality." He writes:

"The essence of the teaching of non-duality is contained in the assertion that there is a single immanent reality which is at once the source, the substratum and the true nature of everything that is manifested as the universe. This reality is directly experienced by every human being, indeed by every sentient being." [The Final Truth. Redondo Beach, California: Advaita Press, 1989, p. 169]

That "single immanent reality" is Consciousness, and the writings in this chapter are directed toward developing an understanding of the nature of that reality through showing that the dualistic perspective that most of us take for reality is an illusion.

For years Ramesh has recorded in notebooks some of the spontaneously occurring thoughts concerning the teaching of non-duality, such as the one he tells about in a letter:

"A thought occurred just two days ago which I recorded in my notebook. It is as under:

There may be little flutterings of the mind on the surface but they are of little consequence when there is stillness in the depth. Will they ever disappear? Perhaps they will, but the significant point is that if there is stillness in the depth, the thought, the concern about mental disturbances or movements, will itself disappear." [June 23, 1987]

In 1989 and 1990, during the annual seminar held at Kovalam Beach in South India, early in the morning Ramesh would write notes about various topics that were germane to his teaching of non-duality. The contents of this chapter are taken from those notes.

These writings are not skillfully crafted essays. They were never intended for publication since they are, after all, just notes. But these are very special notes, having been written by a body-mind in which the awareness of that non-dual state has happened. Moreover, within these notes will be found expressions of some of Ramesh's thoughts that do not seem to have appeared in print before.

Whether or not the material in the notes would be presented in one of Ramesh's talks later in the day was completely unpredictable. Sometimes he would goodhumoredly threaten to read one or more of his notes if those attending the seminar did not ask questions.

One of those who attended both the seminars, Mary Ciofalo, arranged with Ramesh to have a copy made of his notes. In 1995 she made this copy available for another to read, from which came the idea of expanding the readership by presenting some of the material in a privately published booklet. A few months later more material was published in a second booklet. This chapter includes the contents of both the booklets plus some previously unpublished material.

In the first three Sections, titled, THE PROCESS OF HEALING, WITNESSING and SPIRITUAL PRACTICES, Ramesh gives an unusually detailed presentation on a number of approaches to various spiritual practices.

In Section 4 are writings on the remarkable developments that are bringing certain segments of the scientific community ever closer to the non-dualistic perspective which is the basis of Ramesh's teaching.

Ramesh has long been interested in science, and especially in its applicability in presenting his teaching. For years this interest has shown up in many of his letters sent to various correspondents. For example:

"I was particularly interested when you said that you were totally convinced that actions and events are what occur, and that the individuals concerned with them are merely instruments through whom they occur. You added that this conviction is based not only on the teaching but also on scientific principles."

"Do you think you could let me know the scientific basis for your conviction? It would be useful in my talks. This is the first time I have heard anyone mention a scientific basis for the fact that the individual's supposed volition and choice is purely illusory." [May 26, 1990]

"I am entirely in agreement with you when you say that there are several disciplines, apart from Physics and Psychology - like Anthropology and Semantics - which, if properly taught in the earliest classes, could give the young fertile minds a better perspective on what is termed reality." [July 5, 1988]

"How very kind you have been over the past several months, sending me several papers of much interest. I really have been appreciating the fact that science seems to be catching up with mysticism!" [August 1, 1990]

Of course Ramesh's interests lie primarily in those sciences that are at the forefront of that growing approximation to non-duality. And, his interest, which extends to the scientists directly involved in this trend, is also recorded in his letters:

"I do really feel that cases of enlightenment would henceforth necessarily happen more and more frequently through body-mind mechanisms which are functioning as physicists and psychologists, particularly in the West. More and more, I feel, such people are opening out their minds to the fact that what they have been doing is merely scratching the surface and not going deep enough in an entirely different direction, in an entirely different perspective." [June 9, 1988]

"It is my personal belief that in the West, more and more physicists will 'get it' [July 2, 1989]

In the notes appearing in Section 4, several sciences are referred to, but it is physics, and specifically quantum physics, that predominates.

That influence can be seen in a later letter summarizing Ramesh's thoughts on the ultimate development in non-duality.

"I think the big difference - the quantum leap - is the spontaneous feeling 'Consciousness is all there is,' not "I am That", nor "I am in the I-am-ness", nor anything else."

[November 1, 1993]

Section 5, FINAL NOTES, briefly brings closure to this chapter with some special comments from Ramesh.

It will be found that the word "God" is occasionally used, not in reference to a personal deity, but as a synonym for "Consciousness," as in the following:

"Acceptance essentially means accepting the body-mind organism as merely the instrument through which God or Consciousness as the SUBJECT expresses itself objectively." [June 11, 1988]

1. THE PROCESS OF HEALING

The reverse movement - disidentification - the healing of the split caused by the separation - begins with the moment there is what is traditionally known as DISPASSION, the beginning of a sense of dissatisfaction with life and the material things of life which up to that moment gave meaning to life. That is the moment of the beginning of awakening.

The first step, in some cases, has to begin with the healing of the ego, the healing of the split between what the ego has accepted and what the ego has rejected. This split has created a narrowed, inaccurate self-image which needs to be rectified. This split is healed by the simple process of gaining a comprehensive awareness of those very facets of yourself which you had earlier ignored deliberately or unconsciously. These facets are not difficult to locate because they often show up as your symptoms, your opposites, your projections. To heal the split is to take back what you had earlier rejected: to make room within yourself for an understanding and acceptance of all your various potentials, to accept a more accurate self-image. This needs a certain amount of courage and the help of therapy may be necessary.

The next step is the healing of the split between the mind and the body, by reclaiming the physical part to accept the psychophysical organism as a whole. One's awareness is usually almost exclusively head awareness, with "the little man inside" directing and controlling all physical actions. This healing of the split between the body and mind means releasing the block that prevents our sensing the underlying unity between the psyche and soma, the mind and the body - and it is a definite step in the progress towards understanding the unity between the individual and the universe.

A significant boundary concerning the split between mind and body is the fact that the body is a constant reminder as the cause of strong emotions, and while the body is the immediate cause of the physical pleasure (which is often misunderstood as "temptation"), it is also the cause of physical illness and misery, resulting ultimately in the death of the organism and the ego.

Another aspect of the body-mind split is in relation to the voluntary and the involuntary. Thus one moves one's arms but does not digest one's food or make one's hair grow.

The body-mind split is often healed by very simple practices like jogging or simple physical exercise - or, perhaps, yoga practices, including conscious relaxation, conscious deep breathing, which bring about the feeling of a subtle joy and a sense of well being flowing through the body, and from the body-mind organism to the universe outside.

Locate the special tensions which are specific forms of resistance to particular emotions. You will have to open yourself to these emotions which are buried underneath the muscular tensions or cramps. Most often these emotions are quite mild ones which seem dramatic because they have been muscularly in-held and suppressed so long.

The simple healing of the split between body and mind by locating, and then disposing of the blocks, brings about an acceptance of the involuntary processes not only of your body, but the acceptance as perfectly natural all manner of things and processes over which you have no control.

Most often problems in life, including anxiety and tension, stem from the misguided attempts of the mind-intellect, the ego, to consciously manufacture happiness. But when the split between the mind and the body gets healed, and there is an acceptance of the spontaneous and the involuntary with a certain amount of willingness, there arises a wonderful sense of relaxation and wellbeing because there is no longer the compulsive obsession to take charge of everything.

You begin to rest more easily in the spontaneous, with faith and trust in the impersonal self which goes beyond the superficial personal will or volition and ego grumblings. You begin to accept the involuntary spontaneity together with the working volition, both perfectly acceptable as apparent manifestations of a personal entity which is a single representation of the general manifestation of Totality.

Actually, the fact of the matter is that the separation between the willed and the spontaneous, between the voluntary and the involuntary, is really not at all as strict as it might appear. Any act of will has its base in a thought. It is the thought which leads to the supposed willed action. No thought can be willed. It is true that when a thought occurs, it is distilled by the mind before it gets converted into action. In other words, the first thought that arises is spontaneous, and the organism reacts to it, and thereafter the thought is converted into action. The reaction to the first thought is itself based on the natural characteristics of the organism, the genes and the related conditioning. What this means is that the reaction of a particular organism to the first thought or event, is, to a considerable extent, predictable, and is therefore not really willed or voluntary to any extent.

With the understanding of the identity between the will and spontaneity arrives the "meaning of life." To find egoic meaning in life is to do something in life, and up to a point that is not only appropriate but quite inevitable. But beyond that, there is a special meaning to life - not so much doing as being. To find the deepest meaning in life is to find that in the very processes in life, in spontaneous living, is generated naturally the joy of living.

To find real meaning in life is also to accept death in life, to welcome the impermanence of all that is, to release the entire body-mind into emptiness with each exhalation.

To recoil from the death and impermanence of each moment is to recoil from life itself; to yield unconditionally to death on each exhalation is to be reborn and regenerated with each inhalation.

Such a relaxed and easy attitude towards life leads not to irresponsibility as might be imagined, but to an easing of tension. Indeed it leads to more alertness of the mind, because the earlier tendency had been to grab events as they occur and get involved in them, whereas the attitude now is more towards viewing events as they occur more objectively. Gradually witnessing replaces involvement.

Such a transformed attitude certainly leads to living without tension. More importantly, however, it creates conditions suitable for the split between the "me" and the "other" the dualism – to be healed. The basis of this transformed attitude is more witnessing and less personal involvement.

The more important effect of the healing of the mind and body separation is the dawning of the understanding that acceptance as a phenomenon does not involve any conscious effort or control: a wonderful sense of freedom arises with the understanding that the voluntary and the involuntary processes are not merely part of the individual phenomenon, but of the manifestation as a whole.

The acceptance of both the apparently voluntary and what appears to be involuntary as the single working of Totality means that you not only cease to hold others responsible for their apparent acts, but in a way more importantly, you begin to feel a definite lessening of the feeling of personal guilt, perhaps the most crippling feeling one can have.

The conclusion arises that the apparently voluntary and the seemingly involuntary are in reality one.

Energy is eternal delight.

2. WITNESSING

The significance and importance of the phenomenon of witnessing can never be overestimated. It is the beginning of a process which ultimately leads to sudden awakening to our true nature.

The state of continuous witnessing presupposes the absence of personal doership and, at a suitable moment, brings about sudden awakening which is described by KAO FENG as: "At that moment my doubts were suddenly broken up; I felt as if I had suddenly jumped out of a trap and all the different issues and events of both present and ancient times became transparently clear to me. Henceforth, all things were settled; nothing under the sun remained but peace."

A certain amount of conscious effort can establish a contact with the transcendent Self which is, after all, the basic and essential factor immanent in all manifestation.

Sitting in meditation

- a) There is a body, but I am not the body.
- b) There are desires, but I am not the desires.
- c) There are emotions, but I am not the emotions.
- d) There are thoughts, but I am not the thoughts.
- e) I am the witnesser, not that which is witnessed.

As you continue this practice - without making it into a mere ritual - a definite affirmation begins to arise: I am what remains, a pure center of awareness, an unmoved witness of all thoughts, emotions, feelings, and desires, transcending the apparatus through which they arise.

In course of time, the understanding contained in, and generated by this conscious exercise, will by itself begin to deepen, and there will arise a deep inward sense of freedom, lightness, release, stability. And this sense of freedom and buoyancy will be retained even when there is considerable swirling of anxiety and suffering on the surface.

It becomes possible to witness - in alert but definitely detached fashion - the mental and even the physical turmoil that once held you captivated and transfixed in tension. And to the extent that there is actual realization that you are not your anxieties, "your anxieties" will not remain your anxieties.

Any emotion, sensation, thought, memory or experience can disturb you only because you have especially identified yourself with it. In course of time the conscious disidentification with the disturbing emotion or thought will begin to be an unconscious process, bringing with it the deep understanding that all fears and hurts never did really matter because they were in any case quite superficial and temporary. This is what PATANJALI, the codifier of yoga in India, meant when he said that ignorance is the identification of the Seer with the instrument of seeing.

It is most important to understand the significance of this attitude of WITNESSING. In witnessing, there is no avoiding, no moving away from what is witnessed because there is no comparing, no judging. The point is that there is no "me" doing the witnessing: if there is a "me" doing the witnessing (or more accurately, "watching"), it can never be without comparing, without judging, without wanting to do something about it. The sages and the mystics compare the state of witnessing to a mirror. Says Chuang Tsu, "The perfect man employs his mind as a mirror: it grasps nothing, it refuses nothing; it receives but does not retain." The state of witnessing is indeed actually the state of the understanding in action.

Witnessing brings about an outlook through which events occurring in one's own body-mind organism are viewed with the same impartiality and detachment as the events which occur through other organisms. What is more important is that the events are viewed as mere events irrespective of which organism they happen through. Events become just events, like clouds floating through the sky, or rain dropping on the roof, or any other objects or events in your field of awareness, without any personal reaction, particularly any defensive reaction.

An important point to bear in mind at this stage is that the disidentification, which the state of witnessing implies, does not mean a total disorientation with the body-mind

organism. What dissolves is the personal sense of doership and affectivity, but the working mind, the operative element, must continue to function so long as there is an organism alive and functioning.

When it becomes more and more of a habit not to get personally involved in events as they arise - by viewing events always from the viewpoint of the possible effects they may have on oneself - it leads to witnessing taking place as the events arise. Witnessing is essentially based on the understanding that everything happens spontaneously as part of the functioning of Totality; at the same time as witnessing becomes more and more natural, it brings about the deeper understanding - the definite affirmation - that one is neither the body, nor the desires, the emotions and the thoughts that arise, but that one is, in fact, what remains as the ground of everything: a pure center of awareness, an unmoved witness of all the thoughts, emotions, feelings, desires, transcending the organism through which they arise.

A natural result of the process of witnessing is that one's own organism as a whole is accepted as the instrument, like any other instrument, through which Totality functions.

The insight that the transcendent Self - the universal or impersonal Consciousness - transcends the individual organism - whether "one's own" or those of "others" - almost invariably brings with it the intuition of immortality because the mortality can refer only to the body-mind organism which, in fact, started to die from the moment it was born!

3. SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

Rites, ceremonies, Bhajans are all devices in order to remind the members of a congregation of the true nature of things, and of their relationship to one another, God and the universe. Spiritual practices are to private devotion what ritual is to public worship, devices to be used by the individual in his solitary quest, whatever it might be.

Some of those who use spiritual exercises do indeed make progress in their quest, while others apparently using the same devices, do not seem to make much progress, and some of them give up the exercises altogether in frustration. The fact of the matter is that, on the one hand, to believe that the use of such practices and exercises must inevitably lead to enlightenment - or indeed to think that the exercises and practices ARE enlightenment, making of such practitioners divine favorites - is mere idolatry and superstition. On the other hand, to shun them altogether as idolatry and superstition, without trying to find out by going into the matter, is nothing but keeping one's mind closed to truth, amounting to stubborn obscurantism.

In India, the repetition of the divine name or the mantram (a short devotional affirmation) is called Japa and is a favorite spiritual exercise among all sects of Hinduism and Bhuddism. The shortest mantram is, of course, AUM, a vocal symbol, concentrating within itself the core of vedanta, representing the Divine Ground of everything. To this and other mantrams, Hindus attribute a kind of divine power, conferring automatic grace, particularly because it has been personally granted to the disciple by the Guru. A similar efficacy has been attributed to sacred words and formulae of Buddhists, Christians, Jews and Moslems. And of course, in any case, the constant repetition with great faith may, in certain favorable circumstances, have a profound effect upon the subconscious mind, "inducing that selfless one-pointedness of will and thought and feeling, without which

the unitive knowledge of God is impossible." When such integral intuition or insight happens, it would certainly be because the repetition was not broken up or undone by discursive analysis or conceptualization. And then, as the Sufi would say, "the doors of the letters of this ward are opened." But the point, of course, is that while this may happen, it need not necessarily happen - and the very expectation of something happening is the biggest obstruction to the happening. The fact of the matter is that there is no guaranteed cure, and indeed, if the medicine or spiritual practice was used improperly, it may well have started a new disease or have aggravated the old. The whole point is that you cannot turn to God without turning from the self, from the "me" and "mine." The real danger is that the resulting stupefaction or deadening of the mind, or some other abnormal state of mind and body would be wholly mistaken for the immediate awareness of Reality that was so idolatrously cultivated and eagerly hunted after!

The same dangers are encountered in the same form or in other forms by those who make use of elaborate spiritual practices. Intense concentration on any image (even if the image be a sacred symbol, like the lotus) or any idea, is always concentration on something produced by one's own mind. In some cases the concentration may merge into a state of openness and alert passivity, in which true contemplation becomes possible, but, on the other hand, it could result in some kind of false, incomplete or confused contemplation, along with considerable physical discomfort. The divine Ground of all being reveals itself only to those in whom there is no ego-concentratedness of any kind of volition, thought or feeling.

The position is summed up when Meister Eckhart says, "He who seeks God under settled form lays hold of the form, while missing the God concealed in it." The point clearly is to seek God provisionally under a form which from the beginning is clearly recognized as merely a symbol of Reality, a mere signboard or a pointer, that must some time or other be discarded in favor of what it stands for: "To seek Him under a settled form - settled because regarded as the very shape of Reality - is to commit oneself to illusion and a kind of idolatry."

Certain yogic practices can enable one "to feel the flow and sense the course of the excitation in the body", so that the deep body sensations, so far ignored, can reach the surface.

Conscious relaxation, conscious inhaling and exhaling, will bring about a feeling of subtle joy flowing through the entire body, and also the subtle feeling of oneness with the world outside.

Conscious efforts first to realize the unity of the mind and body, such as certain exercises for physical and mental relaxation, and then for contacting the suprapersonal or the transcendent, such as conscious meditation, can and do bring about certain "benefits." However, in regard to the basic and all-pervading impersonal consciousness, which is immanent in the entire manifestation, there is no question of acquiring knowledge concerning it because "you" are already that, but not as an individual "me."

The universal consciousness is all there is: Here and Now. But the split-mind (of subject-object) always seeks because that is its nature. In seeking elsewhere, we are actually

moving away from what we are seeking. And the paradox is that we cannot stop seeking. Even doing nothing is still doing something because there is an object in doing nothing: it is just another kind of moving away from the here-and-now.

This is the big cosmic joke.

The more the individual operates, the more he exists as a separate entity, and the main impediments in the spiritual advance in regard to the practices and exercises would be distractions. Most teachers concur in advising their pupils never to use violent efforts against distractions. Every enhancement of the separate entity will correspondingly reduce the chances of knowing God. The answer clearly is to "look over the shoulders of the malicious and concupiscent imbecile who stands between us and the object of our own simple regard!" In other words, taking a simple notice of the distractions as they appear on the surface will mean that the effortless shift of attention will cause the distractions to lose their obsessive presence and disappear, at least for the time being.

This is what is known as WITNESSING - or as J. Krishnamurti prefers to call it, "choiceless awareness." There may be other names for it, but the basis of the procedure is a dispassionate seeing of the distractions - thoughts, feelings, emotions - as they arise, without judging them, without reacting to them, without any involvement.

And so we arrive at an essential point of the major mystical traditions, namely, that special conditions are appropriate (but not necessary) for the actualization of universal consciousness. And, further, these conditions do not lead to universal consciousness: they are themselves the expressions of universal consciousness.

Until this basic realization happens - and the happening of this realization is itself part of the functioning of Totality - all seeking, all practices, all disciplines mean avoiding God, moving away from the original state of enlightenment.

The final benefit of all seeking is that seeking ceases.

4. SCIENCE AND NON-DUALITY

THE ULTIMATE METAPHYSICAL SECRET

That secret is that there are no boundaries in the universe; that boundaries are illusions created by the mind and the intellect in order to try to map out reality.

The mystic sees no need to map out reality; and this is what he tells his disciples. The illusory nature of the universe - like the personal dream - is now understood by the physicist: there are no separate entities - planets, rocks, meteors, apples, people - which can be physically measured.

The ultimate realities could not even be located - the shock: the atom began to look more like a nebulous cloud that shaded into its environment. The Heisenberg principle of uncertainty.

We found a strange footprint on the shores of the unknown - the creature? - the footprint was our own. (Edington)

Interwoven aspects of each other are the "things." To see is to think: "thinking" and "thinging" are the mechanics for creating boundaries.

Things must be seen to the exclusion of the field. Diversity exists but only in the field. Separation - the basic separation - between the observer-observed - does not exist. The experienced is not independent of the experiencer.

Despite the complex theoretical formulations which often surround the perennial philosophy, the essence of the mystical message is plain, simple and straightforward.

a)

The simple fact is that we live in a world of conflict and opposites because we live in a world where boundaries of various kinds have created more and more separation. The firmer one's boundaries and separations, the more entrenched are one's problems: the more you hold onto pleasure, the more you necessarily fear pain, the more you seek success, the more you must dread failure; the harder you cling to life, the more terrifying death becomes; the more you value something, the more you become obsessed with its loss.

Now our habitual way of trying to solve these problems is to attempt to eradicate one of the opposites; we tend to treat the illusory boundaries of separation as real and then attempt to manipulate the opposites created by the boundary. Because we believe the boundary to be real, we imagine that the opposites thus created are - irreconcilable, separate, forever set apart: we never seem to question the existence of the boundary itself.

Thus we suppose that life would be perfectly enjoyable if we could eradicate all the negative and unacceptable poles of the pairs of opposites. Heaven has come to mean not a transcendence of all opposites, but an illusory place where all the positive halves are accumulated, while Hell is the place where are massed all the negative halves: pain, suffering, torment, anxiety, sickness.

The root of the whole problem is our tendency to view opposites as irreconcilable. But the fact of the matter is that any one supposed opposite has no significance at all if it is divorced from the other supposed opposite. Thus buying and selling are simply ends of the one event of a single business transaction. In this same way, all the opposites share an implicit identity: they are mutually interdependent and therefore quite inseparable. Seen in the rational way there can be no inside without an outside, no win without loss, no pleasure without pain, no life without death.

b)

The point thus is not to separate the opposites and make "positive progress," but rather to unify and harmonize the opposites, both positive and negative, by acknowledging and accepting a ground which transcends and encompasses both. Such a state - the state of enlightenment and freedom is described in the Hindu scripture Bhagavad Gita as freedom not from the negative but from the pairs of opposites altogether:

Content with getting what arrives by itself, passed beyond the pairs, free from envy, not attached to success or failure, even acting, he is not bound. He is to be recognized as eternally free who neither loathes nor craves; for he that is freed from the pairs is easily freed from the content.

And this is from the Gospel of St. Thomas:

When you make the two one, and when you make the inner as the outer and the outer as the inner and the above as the below, and when you make the male and female into a single one, then you shall enter the Kingdom.

c)

When we see through the illusion of separation through boundaries, what we see is the universe as an organic entity, a harmony of opposites, a melody of positive and negative as the universal pulse, a delightful play of our vibratory existence. When the opposites are realized to be one, discord melts into concord, battles become dances, enemies become lovers. For, as Erwin Schrödinger, scientist and philosopher has put it, "Eternally and always there is only now, one and the same now; the present is the only thing that has no end."

Buddha

Suffering alone exists, none who suffer; The deed there is, but no doer thereof; Nirvana there is, but no one seeking it; The path there is, but none who travel it.

Ramana Maharshi

There is neither creation nor destruction;
 Neither destiny nor free will;
 Neither path nor achievement;
 This is the final Truth.

[March 19, 1989]

THE WORLD OF POLARITY

How can there be a God presumed to represent the highest good who nevertheless creates and presides over a world containing so much injustice, crime, war, ugliness, disease?

The question arises because the principle of polarity is ignored because the mutually sustaining relationship of events and forces are considered as being basically separate.

The apparent opposites are really inseparable opposites, like the poles of the earth or the magnet, the ends of a stick, or the two faces of a coin - in fact one cannot exist or have any meaning in the absence of the other.

Why should it be so difficult to understand this fairly obvious fact? Because the human intellect thinks only in abstract terms, and this divides in thought what is undivided in nature: is it this or is it that? Is it good or is it bad?

Basically there are no boundaries. It is the intellect which creates boundaries: latitude and longitude; the walls of a box are common to both what is inside and outside (in space there is no separation).

If the polarity of opposites is overlooked, the opposites present shocking paradoxes. Nature presents a series of paradoxes.

The first paradox is that things move without following a law of mechanical motion: all particles composing the physical universe must take the quantum leap - the tiny but explosive jump that a particle undergoes in moving from one place to another. They must move in this fashion or cease to exist.

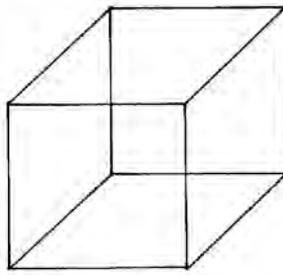
The second paradox: the old scientific idea that whatever was observed as being "out there" was indeed out there has been found to be untrue. The particle does not have properties independent of what the observer observes.

The third paradox: Despite the natural disorder apparent in the double-slit experiment and other experiments, there does exist an order to the universe: only it is not that order that we expect. It is difficult even to conceive it because the true order involves something more than the physical world: it involves us, our minds, our thoughts; it includes the proposition that atoms may not exist without observers of atoms.

The appearance of the physical world seems paradoxical because the orderly processes of science had failed to take the observer into account: the order of the universe is the order of our own minds - the universal consciousness. Hence the persistent question of Ramana Maharshi: Who wants to know?

The universe seems to be composed of facts and their opposites at the same time, but the processes of our perception are such that we cannot see the opposites at the same time: the familiar image of the figure/ground constellation. And what is important is that without this intermingling of facts and counterfacts at the same time, no "real world" would ever be possible.

The "paradoxical cube" is an analogy of the abstract world of quantum physics which demonstrates the duality in our acts of observation - known to physicists as the principle of Complementarity.



The illustration which when viewed by the observer is a "cube", because he is conditioned to think of everything in terms of solidity - presents the problem of the jumping cube. Which square is facing you? And when you view the illustration as an abstract pattern with eight points and twelve connecting lines, no problem arises.

What this analogy of the paradoxical cube tells us is that the wave patterns of the physicist are not observable unless one is looking for them. Each individual atom leaves one spot on the screen, and it is the overall pattern of all the atomic spots that tells us something else is going on: the wave patterns are complementary pictures to the individual particle spots. Thus, the common examples are "the forest and the trees," "the rights of the State and the rights of the individual," etc.

The two opposites in nature are interconnected as complements of each other, and trying to define a system in terms of only one of them could be extremely misleading. Our everyday senses cannot be trusted to give a total or correct view of reality; there is invariably a complementary, perhaps hidden, side to everything we experience.

It is extremely difficult to give up our preconditioning. We keep choosing the "reality" of the world through conceptualizing - our existing images in the mind - without even being aware of it. But once we have seen the complementary side of the world reality, our old prejudices would begin to crumble, and the barrier between mind and matter begin to dissolve.

When the Eastern mystic tells us that he experiences all things and events as the manifestation of a basic unity, he does not pronounce all manifested things as identical and equal. He does recognize the individuality of things, but he is at the same time fully aware that all differences and contrasts are relative, within an all-embracing unity, as gold ornaments and gold.

The mystic transcends the realm of intellectual concepts and is thus aware of the relativity and polaric relationship of all opposites. He is aware that life and living can never be a static identity but always a dynamic interplay between two opposites - good and bad, acceptable and unacceptable. The Chinese sages called the underlying unity between Yin and Yang the TAO, and saw it as a process which brings about the interplay: that which lets now the dark, now the light, appear - is Tao.

The Paradox of Freedom

The polarity of freedom is an ancient and double paradox: one, freedom as the complement of bondage, two, freedom of will as the opposite of predestination.

What does one mean by liberty? It would obviously not mean letting go of all restraints or the abandoning of every normal rule of behavior. If a violin string is lying loose on a table, it could be considered as being "free" in the sense that it is unconstrained. And what is it free to be or to do? Yet if it is fastened to the violin it has been rendered "free" to play when it is tightened to its allotted pitch.

The second and related paradox of freedom is the age-old controversy of free will and destiny. One might well wonder how could some source of foreknowledge correctly predict whether a planned trip will materialize or not if it is true that you were perfectly free to change your mind. Yet the simple resolution of this paradox turns out to be nothing but the dimensional difference between the impinging perspective of free will and fate. Imagine a hungry puppy coming to a corner where he has to choose between turning left to a plate of dry fishbones abandoned by the cat, and turning right toward a dish of his favorite hamburger. Of course, the puppy has the free will to decide, but it takes only one sniff to decide him. The point is that he is free to do what he wants, but is he free to want what he wants? His free will and fate interrelate somewhat like a flat 2-D picture and a solid 3-D model of the same thing.

The Essence of Consciousness

We seem to be much like puppets with seeming free will but with someone holding the strings. Eugene Wigner, the physicist, offers the answer: our consciousness alters the world by altering us. It affects how we appraise the future. The explanation given by the mystics is that the impersonal universal consciousness operates through the individual mind, the individual machine, the organism with memory, and it does this by altering our own quantum wave functions, our brain waves.

So we experience the world as if we were on strings and tied to the post or to a heavenly manipulator, because we cannot precisely control the results of our choices. You are indeed the fiddler but the tune may not come out precisely as you wish because the "heavenly manipulator" may not move the fiddler's fingers precisely as is required to produce the desired tune.

Consciousness is the creative element in the universe, without it nothing would appear. All is flow and the world is changing continuously in a smooth fashion. But it is a world controlled by the Master Manipulator with all its branches spread out in space-time like a network with the grandest design - there is in fact no consciousness as a personal controller: none is needed.

Consciousness is what consciousness does:

It performs a dual role in the universe - it is, in the world of the quantum, both the awareness and the creation of experience; both the being of experience and the knowing of experience. In fact, knowing is mind and being is matter, both in continual reaction in the magical process we call consciousness.

The world of quantum function - a causal world of exact mathematical occurrence without any matter present - is a world of paradox and utter confusion for the limited human intelligence. It is a world where consciousness occupies both a single place at a single time and an infinite number of places at the same time. Yet there is an explicit order to the paradox: there is a pattern to the many positions, a symmetry. By attempting to observe that pattern we can only disrupt that pattern and this disruption appears to us as the principle of uncertainty. All we can do is to go along with it!

The alternative to this uncertain world is a certain world, in which particles would follow well-determined paths with exact locations at each and every point. But this alternative is known to be unworkable. The tiny electron inside of every atom would have to radiate every instant in such a determined world and it would lose all of its energy and would quickly fall into the nucleus. All atoms would disappear, all electromagnetic energy would vanish, and all nervous systems would cease their activity - all life would stop.

Yet security is there! You feel its presence. It is the very longing for the perfection of the universal order that we all feel - the desire to crawl back in the universal womb, a desire which is fulfilled in phenomenal life in the form of deep sleep every so often. [April 13, 1990]

IS THE BODY REALLY SOLID?

However solid the body may appear to be, the established fact remains that it is from a single cell that the body has been developed. The electron-scanning microscope, with a magnification of several thousand times, shows the human body as a sort of fantasy, a seascape as different from our own perception of the body with our eyes as could possibly be imagined. The pores of the skin open like ocean caves; a bundle of nerve fibers curving its way across a section of muscle tissue appears like a "sea serpent lying on a giant walrus"; what appears as thousands of tadpoles swimming furiously against the current are, unbelievably, sperm cells struggling for survival against incredible odds - the whole presenting a monstrous sea spectacle. However, underneath there is still apparent solidity because the magnification that could penetrate this solidity is still not available. But an intelligent projection based on what the electron-microscope has so far revealed, would clearly indicate the "solid" flesh dissolving into a sort of condensed vapor, muscle fiber assuming a distinctly crystalline aspect, showing that it is made of long spiral molecules interconnected and held in place by imperceptible waves pulsing many trillions of times a second.

Within molecules would be atoms, their interiors veiled by vague clouds of electrons; then the shell dissolves and it is all emptiness. Deep, deep within that emptiness, the subatomic physicist tells us, is a nucleus which, being an oscillating field, begins to dissolve, showing further organized fields, protons, neutrons, and even smaller particles, each of which also dissolves into nothing but the rhythm of the universal pulse. In other words, there is really no solidity at all, either at the most sublime level of the body, or at the heart of the universe.

The compact nucleus at the very heart of the atom, then, is nothing solid, but rather a dynamic pattern of concentrated energy throbbing and vibrating at an inconceivably fast rate - a veritable frenzied dance of Shiva in which creation and destruction take place continuously and almost simultaneously. This is what prompted Sir James Jeans to call the universe "mental, rather than material" - as Nisargadatta Maharaj would say, "Chittamatra" (mind stuff only), or "Vijnaplema" (representation only).

The astronomer also presents us with the same beguiling transparency that in the final sense seems to constitute what are apparently solid objects when he tells us that when galaxies sometimes meet head on, all they do is pass through each other like two summer clouds.

The human body, like all living organisms, has its own electromagnetic field, and thus we are affected to a varying extent one way or another by the pulsating fields that crisscross one another throughout space, not only by the nearer events like the turning of the earth on its axis, the tides and the seasons, but even by the distant solar flares known as sunspots. In other words, each one of us is in direct or indirect relationship with all that is. It is, of course, through the senses that the various organized fields of rhythm (constituting the totality of the organism) are connected with one another and with the rhythms of the entire universe. [April 19, 1990]

SHORT NOTES AND EXCERPTS

The human brain is millions of years old, and over that vast expanse of time it has evolved certain basic ware of perceiving and grasping what appears to be reality, as well as the true reality behind the appearance. Carl Jung calls this deeper layer of the psyche the "collective unconscious" - not individual, not personal, but supra-individual, transcendent, transpersonal - which houses the collective motifs of the entire human race, which moves us deeply in ways both creative and destructive. This transcendent Self is a center and expanse of awareness which is detached from one's personal mind, body, emotions, thoughts and feelings. [March 1989]

If you observe the attempts of a human infant to grasp the finger held out before him, you can travel back in time to the earliest human attempts at OBSERVATION. In trying to grasp the finger - and indeed grasp understanding - the infant child is becoming aware of the subtle division between itself and the outside world: a process of thinking is going on that is really wordless. The distinction that is going on in the child's brain - the separation of the "out there" from the "in here" is really the creation of the split-mind, the subject-object distinction. [March 28, 1989]

The dualism between the "me" and the "other" arises in the child when it begins to differentiate between the finger of the mother or the father (which it considers as "mine"

and acceptable) and that of a stranger (which it considers as "not mine"). And on this separation, in this dualism, is lost the child's innocence. [March 28, 1989]

The sperm cell swims with rhythmic strokes and joins the egg. Molecules of DNA dance together, pulse-like concentrations of fields interact, multiply, differentiate. A singular pattern emerges, something unique in the universe: a new being.

Remembering everything, the being passes through the various stages of earthly evolution, accompanied by the powerful drumbeat of the mother's heart. The new being is shaken to the core by these pulsations which promise purpose, wholeness, synchrony. Secure in this rhythm, the new being's own heart takes form and begins an answering pulse.

As soon after birth as possible, the mother takes the baby to her breast, close in her embrace, it's head against her heart. The rhythm is still there, a reliable beat against which to measure the flow of growth and change. Later, there will be other rhythms, other relationships. But some deep knowledge of those early moments remains, a reminder of the rhythm that sustains life and underlies all of existence.

At the heart of each of us, whatever our imperfections, there exists a silent pulse of perfect rhythm, a complex of wave forms and resonances which is absolutely unique and individual, and yet which connects us to everything in the universe. The act of getting in touch with this pulse transforms our personal experience and alters the world around us. [March 28, 1989]

From the operational point of view, the mind or the ego is the connection between consciousness and the physical body which is inert and insentient. When, through deep understanding - apperception - the sense of personal doer-ship gets lost, the operational mind functions only as the "working mind" and loses or gives up its "thinking" aspect, the aspect of conceptualizing or creating images. [March 25, 1989]

Our phenomenal world is more a collection of natural processes rather than individual entities. The sun, a thing, shines, but actually the shining is a process, is the nature of the sun, and not something the sun "does."

The individual entity, similarly, is not a thing which does something: whatever he seems to do is a process or an event which is natural to that organism. The individual thus is, in everyday practical experience - not in theory - an abstract of general outlines based on certain selected impressions concerning certain selected events. [March 30, 1989]

What consciousness does is a dual duty in the universe: it is both the awareness and the creation of experience. It is the being and the knowing of experience.

The Twentieth Century quantum mechanics has brought together the Eastern mystic and the Western physicist. In the world of the quantum, consciousness is both awareness and the creation of experience. Thereby, the quantum physicist has rubbed out the dividing line between the theory of being (ontology) and the theory of knowing (epistemology). [March 23, 1989]

The basic paradox of phenomenality is that there appears to be a causal world of exact maker-material accuracy, but there is no matter present: it is a world of utter confusion for the human, limited intelligence. The reason is that consciousness both occupies a single place at a single point of time and, at the same time, occupies an infinite number of places. Yet there is an explicit order to the paradox: there is a pattern to the many positions, a symmetry.

The precise situation is that we, who exist in the world of matter, can only disturb the existing perfection of the paradox by attempting to observe the patterns. This disruption of God's order appears to us as the principle of Indeterminism or Uncertainty. Thus we become helpless, feel inadequate, and long for the order in the universe which we consider proper and necessary. All we can do is to go along with it. [March 20, 1989]

The distinction between animate and inanimate simply cannot be made in the world of quantum mechanics. Nor can we determine how those apparent subatomic particles, of which we and everything else are composed, are all tied together. Indeed, the very fact of trying to observe something can, and does, affect that which is being observed, even though we may think we are at a great distance.

The study of quantum physics makes it amply clear that the tiniest particles all work with some mysterious perfection, both individually and in concert with all other particles anywhere in the universe at the precise same moment, irrespective of the time element. How then can there be any question of independent, individual volition for the human being? [April 18, 1990]

The Quantum leap is the tiny but explosive jump that a particle of matter undergoes in moving from one place to another. All particles composing the physical universe must move in this fashion, or cease to exist. "We" are composed of atomic and subatomic matter, and therefore we too must take the quantum leap.

In the figurative sense, taking the quantum leap means taking a risk, venturing into uncharted territory with no guide to follow.

This means giving up preconceived ideas - courage. [March 20, 1989]

5. FINAL NOTES

The seeking - the beginning of the seeking is spontaneous; the sudden realization that all seeking means in effect moving away from the original state, is also spontaneous; the remaining in the here-and-now thereafter is also spontaneous. This is the cosmic joke. [March 28, 1989]

It is not that we are not free to choose. On the contrary, we cannot not choose. Our daily life and living is nothing but making choices. Indeed, making choices is living. [March 20, 1989]

The essence of the mind is awareness or consciousness, which is all there is. There is nothing other than consciousness, which is mind turned inwards, the universal or impersonal consciousness, or the cosmic mind. When the mind - is turned outward towards the illusory world, it becomes the ego. Otherwise there is nothing separate from the pure Consciousness, which can only be pure awareness - not aware of anything other than itself, and is precisely what is referred to in the Bible by the words, "I am that I am." [March 25, 1989]

Who experiences any experience? The body-mind organism is only the instrument through which the experience is registered. And the deep realization of this one fact dispels the ignorance of all search because, as every Master has impressed in his own way, the observer cannot be the instrument of observing. All that exists is universal consciousness which is itself all functioning in the manifestation. [March 28, 1989]

True understanding understands that there can be no separation between understanding and action: there can be no conscious action separate from the understanding.

True understanding means a natural prevention of the thinking mind from intruding upon the smooth functioning of the working mind.

Once there is a clear understanding - that there really is no personal volition - you may do whatever you like. [March 18, 1989]

What is the one undeniable experience that everyone of us feels at any moment? It is the experience of our own existence, the instant knowing that is for each of us the consciousness of our being alive, of our own existence, of our presence.

This is the I AM experience, perhaps the only true knowledge. Take a moment to reflect upon whatever it is you are doing at any instant: you are now reading this note. That instant of reflection is the experience that "all is one," the experience both ultimate and fundamental. Everything else is a concept, an illusion. We cannot ever be certain that anything out there is really there because it is beyond our immediate experience. By always continuously being in that immediate experience - the present eternal moment - one is ALL, one is God, all else is an illusion. [March 28, 1989]

TAPES

INTRODUCTION

Nineteen audio tapes were made of Ramesh's daily talks in the morning and the late afternoon at the last Kovalam Seminar during late February and early March of 1995. What follows are transcriptions of excerpts taken from two of those tapes: Number 7, in the morning of February 24; and Number 13, in the morning of March 1.

It is indeed fortunate to have such a record of some of the proceedings of this specific seminar, not only because it was the last one, but more importantly, because it was a very special one, as indicated in the words of Mary Ciofalo cited above (pp. 20) in her letter to Ramesh:

"Several things struck me about this particular seminar. One is the feeling that I have that this will be the last one. There was also an awareness that never before had I heard you so concise, focused, speaking so clearly. I was amazed again and again at the clarity and simplicity of what was being said. So much healing happened. So much change occurred. Never before at a seminar can I remember following the development of several participants through their questions and the responses as clearly as this time.

"So I think that transcribing the tapes into a book, perhaps "Ramesh Balsekar at the Last Kovalam Seminar", would be a good idea, and helpful to those who are moved through your books and reading about you."

And finally, it will be observed that during the course of these remarkable talks, some seldom-considered topics are presented with that exceptional "clarity and simplicity," such as, "Enlightenment does not mean perfection."

FEBRUARY 24, 1995 A.M.

Many of us have wrong notions about enlightenment. One of the wrong notions is that enlightenment means perfection. Enlightenment does not mean perfection. Enlightenment simply means, in plain terms, understanding what is real and what is unreal. That's all it really means. Truly understanding and accepting the unreal as unreal and the real as real.

One normally expects the real to be that which is apparent to the senses. That which is apparent to the senses is real. That which is not apparent to the senses is unreal. That is the general idea.

Actually, it is exactly the other way around. What appears to your senses is merely an appearance in consciousness. The totality of manifestation is an appearance in consciousness, like a dream. Its functioning is an impersonal and self-generated process. The process is carried out through the billions of sentient beings, who are merely instruments. They have no volition. They are merely instruments through which this impersonal functioning process happens. And a true appreciation of this, a true apperception or understanding of this means that you know what is real and what is unreal.

What appears is unreal. That which makes its appearance as an appearance in consciousness is real. So, consciousness is real, any appearance in consciousness is unreal.

What appears is unreal, but unreal doesn't mean it doesn't appear. There is an appearance. You stand before a mirror and you see your reflection. The reflection is real enough because it is there. And yet the reflection is unreal in the sense that the reflection has no separate existence of its own. The reflection in the mirror depends entirely on you as a substance. So, consciousness is what is real, the appearance in consciousness is like a dream, and that is unreal .

What happens when there is enlightenment, when there is transformation? I prefer the word "awakening," because the manifestation is, as I said, like a dream. The suffering and the pleasures in this dream are exactly as they are in the personal dream. The suffering and the pleasures in the personal dream, in the dream of the dreamed character are very real. So in this living dream the pleasures and the unhappiness are very real.

So, after enlightenment it doesn't mean that the physical body doesn't suffer anything, the mind doesn't suffer anything. The physical body, the psychosomatic apparatus is subject to physical pleasure and pain. The only difference is that one doesn't become involved after the transformation.

There is a certain amount of confusion about this. What happens is just one thing. I repeat, just one thing. The seeking stops. The seeking for enlightenment or whatever stops, and when the seeking stops, the seeker is eliminated. When the seeking stops there is no seeker. When there is no seeker there is no individual doer. There is no individual thinker. There is no individual experienter.

The thinking happens. The doing happens. The experiencing happens. But there is no individual to get involved in the thinking that happens, the doing that happens, the experiencing that happens.

So this is the basic transformation. The seeker doesn't exist anymore, the seeking stops, which means all problems created by the mind-intellect have vanished. Everything becomes transparently clear. That is the basis of the transformation.

And I repeat again, the transformation, or awakening, or liberation, or whatever you call it, does not mean perfection, which is one of the greatest misunderstandings.

First of all, there is no one to get enlightened. Enlightenment is part of the impersonal process that has been going on in the manifestation. Therefore, that there should be someone who is enlightened is not correct. Enlightenment happens.

The seeking begins as a happening, the enlightenment also happens. For the enlightenment to happen a body-mind process is needed, which is conceived and created with a certain minimum receptivity that is needed. The individual cannot attain liberation. Liberation is really liberation from the concept of bondage. There is no individual, there is no bondage, therefore there is no liberation.

There is only understanding of what is real and what is unreal. That is all that liberation or awakening means.

As I've said, liberation or enlightenment is not perfection. Almost everyone has asked the question, "What has happened?", "What has changed?", and the answer is, "Nothing has changed. Life continues to be exactly what it has been.

Life has pleasures and pains, life has difficulties, more or less the same way, more or less to the same extent."

But what has changed is the attitude towards the feeling of those pleasures and pains. So this kind of attitude remains in the sense only that what has changed is that what is real is truly apperceived as real. Nothing has happened in the case of the individual where enlightenment has happened.

What kind of change is this? Thus, in the case of Ramana Maharshi, Jesus Christ, or Ramakrishna Paramahansa, if he was called by name, he would respond. That means identification with the body-mind is still there. The identification with the body has to be there for the body-mind to function. If the identification with the body-mind were not there, the person, the individual would be like a zombie.

So what has totally been eliminated? What has been eliminated is the sense of personal doership, the sense of personal volition, the sense of personal freedom. That is what has gone.

Therefore, the deed is seen as a deed, not as my deed. The thinking that happens is not my thought. A thought happens. And there is a reaction. The reaction of the brain to a thought, or something one sees, or hears, is recognized as a reaction and not my reaction. But over a period it is possible that the tendencies, once they are exhausted, they will not appear.

But the basic point I'm making is that the sage is not concerned. For him the individual is dead, and he is no longer concerned with the body-mind.

But the whole point is that a body-mind does not get angry. But anger can still arise.

And the same with smoking. If the body-mind likes to smoke, smoking will continue, and if something happens, the smoking stops. When the smoking has produced cancer of the throat, the smoking will stop.

So the body-mind organism in many ways continues to have its natural characteristics. Someone who is short-tempered will continue to be short-tempered. People might say, "Oh, that man smokes. How can he be enlightened?"

If someone is not fully awakened he may try to avoid being angry to show that he is enlightened. A body-mind in which true enlightenment has occurred, would make no such effort.

MARCH 1, 1995 A.M.

We are coming towards the end of this seminar.

I thought that I would review the basics of what I've been talking about.

The first thing I would like to say is that everything we think and convert into words becomes a concept. The only thing that is not a concept is the feeling that we are: I Am, I exist, I am alive. For that awareness you don't need to ask anybody. That is the only knowledge that you truly have: "I Am," and that "I-I," which is the manifest manifesting itself as the appearance in consciousness. I Am is the universal consciousness which is present in every body-mind organism.

The separation comes when the "I Am" becomes "I am John, " and that separation is the cause of all the bondage and misery. The human being is not the cause of the separation.

How did that separation come into being. The personal consciousness of the Impersonal Consciousness identified itself with each body-mind organism in its aspect of sentience. Sentience is that aspect of consciousness which enables the senses to work, to function. So, the animal has sentience and the human being has sentience. The animal has no problem with bondage and awakening. The human being does. And that is because the consciousness has brought about identification with each body-mind organism through the mechanism of the mind. So it is the mind which is really the cause of the separation. The mind of the ego. But the ego has been an independent occurrence. It is not due to any part of the human being. So the ego that is there has to get accepted as part of the functioning of Totality.

Now, the mind is a mechanism through which the consciousness has created the separation. The separation started in the wholeness of the universe. And this separation is through the mind.

Now, the rational mind has done something by way of giving us the mastery of the rest of the world. But, on the other hand, what it has given us, it has taken more than that away by this separation. What this separation has brought about is a sense of independence. The same blind thought which has created the separation has also created the illusion of being in charge. Not only being in charge of the world, but also being in charge of ourselves. The rational mind doesn't accept that it has limitations.

How much freedom does the human being have? Physically he is bound by his physical limitations, as determined to a considerable extent by his inherited DNA.

Psychologically he's been conditioned from the very beginning, at home, in school, at church or the temple. The conditioning has been going on continuously. So what we call a human being is physiologically limited, psychologically limited. And so, how much freedom does he really have?

What a human being calls his action, what is it really? The action a human being thinks is his action is really the reaction of the body-mind organism to outside impulses. The outside impulse may be a thought, or something seen, or something heard. No human being has full control over what he's going to see, nor over what he's going to hear. And so, he certainly has no control over the thoughts that might arise. Once he has thought about it, or once he has said something, or once he has heard something, the brain reacts to the outside impulses, and creates a reaction, and the human being thinks the reaction is his action.

The action of the human being, then, is nothing but a reaction of the brain to an outside impulse. And the outside impulse is not in his control.

So, to that extent it would seem to me that the action is hardly an action where there is freedom of choice.

And even when there is some control over choice, such as it is, it is effected by other things, such as when you go out to buy some clothing, to what extent does your free will act? Mostly you may choose something, but promptly your mind will say, "But that is not in fashion." The fashion will dictate something other than what you choose. So you buy something, not because of your free will, but because it is dictated by fashion.

And so, whichever way you look at it, the free will is merely a myth. And if free will is a myth, then what is it that functions? The separation has caused this misery, because what truly functions is what Schopenhauer calls, "a Superior Entity." It is the Impersonal Consciousness, before which the individual consciousness is like a dream compared to reality.

Thus, we do not accept the overwhelming Superiority, or the Superior Order which brings about all this apparent chaos. So the only way the separation can be healed is if we accept that there is a pervading order over which we are not in control, and accept also the total wholeness of the universe, or the creation as a whole.

Not accepting the wholeness of the universe is the cause for what is called the separation. So the only way the separation can be healed is by the realization and true acceptance that what functions is not the human being, but the Superior Order, the functioning of Totality or God's will. Basically, what it boils down to is, is it God's will or is it my will?

If it is God's will and not my will, then the obvious answer to that point is that all actions which are done through any body-mind organism are not truly any one's actions, but God's actions. But it is not easy to accept this, and the mind promptly raises several objections.

One of the objections is, "If there is nothing in my hands, why should I do anything? Why should I not remain idle?"

But the point is that you cannot remain idle. There is energy in this body-mind organism, and that energy will not allow the body-mind organism to remain idle.

The second objection is, "If nothing is in my hands, then I could go and commit a murder. Why should I be punished?"

The answer is that it is not so easy to commit a murder. If your natural instincts, the natural characteristics of your body-mind organism as such, if you are not a violent person, then you can't commit a murder simply because there is immunity, or there is assumed immunity, in the sense of, "If God has done it, why should I be punished?" That is the apparent problem, but the point is that all actions that are produced by God's body-mind organism, are not his actions, but the actions over which he had no control, and all

actions that had happened through a body-mind organism are strictly according to the destiny of that organism.

I repeat, the destiny not of the individual, because the individual just doesn't exist. The individual is a fiction. All that exists is the body-mind organism through which the Totality or God functions.

So, if God has created a certain action through a body-mind organism, then the consequences of that action will also have to be borne by the body-mind organism as part of existence.

Suppose a murder has been committed. Then it means that it was the destiny of that body-mind organism to commit the murder, and the destiny of the other body-mind organism to be murdered. So, it more or less takes place.

The situation is, then, that a murder has taken place. The question of who has done it is really eliminated. The body-mind organism through which the murder has been committed may, if it is captured, be punished. If it is not captured, that body-mind will not be punished. So, whether the punishment is to happen or not is again the destiny of that body-mind organism.

And thus we cannot remain idle. Some activity will happen according to the natural characteristics of the body-mind organism, and the consequences for that body-mind organism, punishment or reward, will also be a part of the destiny of that body-mind organism.

And if it is so that all actions of this body-mind organism are God's actions and not my own, then the main important corollary of that understanding is that I cannot have a sense of guilt. If I truly accept that all actions are God's actions, can you imagine the extent of freedom from guilt that will arise? Much of the trouble that human beings suffer is the feeling of guilt. You accept what happens as God's actions, so the feeling of guilt is not there. And along with that, and perhaps more important, the feeling of pride isn't there either. Certain actions are achieved to obtain money, fame and power perhaps. Then, with this understanding a sense of pride will not arise because you accept that it all is a result of God's actions.

And even more important than this is the fact that if I understand and truly accept that all actions that happen through this body-mind are not my actions, I must also promptly accept that the actions which happen through some other body-minds are not his or her actions. If that is so, how can I possibly consider anybody my enemy?

These are the results of a true understanding happening, that nothing is my action, all actions are God's actions. Irrespective of the consequences of those actions, both the actions and the consequences of those actions will depend on the destiny of the organism.

So a major difficulty arises when the mind says, "All right, I accept that. But how do I function in life? I have to go about life making decisions, taking action. How do I go about it?"

The answer has been provided by a German philosopher and mathematician, a genius named Hans Vaihinger, who wrote a book about the turn of the century (1900), and he called it, The Philosophy Of 'As If', and what he said is very simple. What he said was:

"You know that you don't have any free will, you accept that you don't have free will, you accept that our actions are God's actions, but continue to live your life as if you have free will."

"When you have to make your decision, make your decision. If you have to take action, take action, but with the deep understanding that it is not your action, that you have no free will, and therefore, don't pay too much attention to the consequences. Accept the consequences along with the action."

"Now this seems strange. If I have no free will, how can I take any action? The answer is, you take your actions, you make your decisions as if you have free will."

This 'As If' approach is not all that absurd as it seems. We know that the sun doesn't rise, the sun doesn't set. The sun doesn't move. And yet, when we talk we say quite easily that the sun rises and sets.

"So if we can accept that the sun rises and sets, when we know that the sun doesn't move anywhere, why should it be so difficult to make decisions and to take action as if we had free will?" That's about all, I think. We started with some and ended with how we should act.

Ramakrishna Paramahansa was once asked, "I am not interested in your various discussions on Bhakti, I am not a Bhakti man. But for me, tell me how I should live."

The answer was amazingly simple. He said, "Have the true conviction that you are merely a machine operated upon by God. And then you may do whatever you like." Obviously, that "whatever you like" that you will be doing with your "free will," cannot possibly be anything else. So, I repeat, make your decisions, take your actions as if you had free will.

In other words, accept the "What Is" as It is, and if that "What Is" presents itself with a problem, something to be dealt with, deal with it, to the best of your ability, without bothering about what might have been or what should have been.

BOOKS**INTRODUCTION**

Concerning the publication of his presentation of the teaching of Advaita, Ramesh wrote to a correspondent, "The intention, if any, was purely to provide books which would help the eager seekers."

IT SO HAPPENED THAT

RAMESH S. BALSEKAR
(MARY CIOFALO, EDITOR)
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In an informal interview, which occurred during one of the talks in Kovalam Beach, Ramesh was asked about changes in his relationship with others as a result of the Awakening.

"I think in the relationship with others, the marked difference, which could perhaps be seen by others and felt by others, is a far deeper sense of compassion and much, much less confrontation. It is always a feeling of compassion and never one of confrontation or any negative feeling." (p. 112.)

FROM CONSCIOUSNESS TO CONSCIOUSNESS

RAMESH S. BALSEKAR
REDONDO BEACH, CALIFORNIA: ADVAITA PRESS
1989

I have come across a copy of a statement I read out to the German group at the [Kovalam Beach] retreat in March/April [1988]. I thought I would reproduce it for you:

WHAT IS ACCEPTANCE?

I. Acceptance as such, basically means accepting the characteristics of any given body-mind mechanism as part of the totality of phenomenal manifestation over which the concerned individual had no control. Such acceptance leads to:

a) accepting one's own limitations not as something to improve upon with one's own efforts, but leaving the improvement, if any is needed, to the natural process. Such acceptance prevents any sense of frustration in case the efforts are not very successful;

b) accepting the natural 'limitations of any "other" body-mind mechanism without judging (including the inability of that body-mind, at that moment, to "accept");

c) accepting, in any love/affection relationship, the prevailing relevant positive/negative or aggressive/passive roles according to the existing natural characteristics of the persons concerned in the relationship, irrespective of sex (male or female). Such acceptance of what-is will prevent the arising of questions such as "why should it be always me who has to give in?" Indeed, such genuine acceptance or understanding will almost certainly tend to produce a smoothening in the relationship. Any exceptionally difficult relationship will, of course, resolve itself one way or another in due course.

II. Acceptance, as such, also essentially means accepting the subjectivity of God or Totality or Consciousness or Ishwara, together with the existence of the "me," the identification, as merely the operational element in the body-mind organism. Such acceptance leads to:

a) accepting the body-mind organism as merely the instrument through which God or Consciousness as the SUBJECT expresses itself objectively;

b) attention being paid wholly to the work in hand, without its being spread to the periphery through worries about the results or consequences; this obviously leads to a conservation of energy that would otherwise have been wasted in the form of tension and stress;

c) a combination of tolerance and humility which becomes utterly irresistible in human relationships. When there is acceptance of one's own limitations, there arises a natural tolerance about the limitations in "others." The resulting humility is not the interconnected opposite of "pride"; we often find that the supposedly "humble" people are some of the proudest people we know, the apparent humility being the cloak of hypocrisy. The true humility is the natural consequence of the surrender of the "me" as the doer, always in competition with the rest of the world.

III. Acceptance/understanding very often makes the relevant body-mind mechanism extremely sensitive, and to that extent the mirrored suffering or pleasure becomes more intense: the jnani weeps with those who weep and laughs with those who laugh, without any sense of personal embarrassment in either case.

I prepared this brief note (which was xeroxed and circulated) when I found that there was some confusion in the understanding of the word "acceptance." This was noticed in the personal interviews. Another concept about which there seemed the necessity of some clarification was that of Self-enquiry. I therefore prepared another brief note which was also xeroxed and circulated.

SELF ENQUIRY

Self-enquiry must necessarily begin with the "me". It is in those extraordinarily few cases where there is instant acceptance of the Guru's pronouncement that the "me" is an illusory concept (and that all the body-mind organisms are merely instruments through which the Totality or Consciousness as the only subjective doer functions) that there is no need of the process of self-enquiry.

Self-enquiry must necessarily begin with the "me" and the mind-intellect. But in such an enquiry the intellect unwittingly lays a trap, conceals it with a lot of concepts, builds an

elephant pit, and then falls into it itself! It is for this reason that Ramana Maharshi says - or implies - that intellect can only ask the question "Who (or what) am I?" Intellect, it must be at once understood, cannot provide the answer because it DOES NOT KNOW - it CANNOT KNOW: such knowledge cannot be objective, but only a subjective experience of I AM. You cannot KNOW deep sleep, you can only talk about it in the waking state!

Therefore, to ask questions such as "Who (or what) is it that lives my life?", and "What is my relationship with it?", is to lay a trap of conceptualization into which the mind-intellect falls very quickly and reaches the depths of despair and desperation. And then arise all sorts of doubts and problems which thrive on the "experiences" which personal efforts and sadhana sometimes bring about. Thus, one "sees a light" or "hears a sound" while sitting in meditation! But the point is that whenever any light is seen or sound is heard or experience is felt, there has to be some "one" who sees or hears or feels. The question therefore must arise: Who (or what) is this someone? And the mind- intellect is back into the elephant pit.

The quantum leap out of this conceptual elephant pit cannot come out of any phenomenal effort which itself has brought about this situation. It can only happen when the self-generated impersonal functioning of Totality is suddenly realized, in which realization the "me," the "someone," gets annihilated. And the joke - or the tragedy - is that such realization can only happen at the appropriate time, which is quite beyond the control of the phenomenal seeker in the form of a body-mind mechanism. This realization is the sudden end result of the conviction, the constantly (mentally) repeated irresistible refrain, "it does not matter - nothing matters." Matter to whom? To the "me," of course, because the "me" is in the process of being annihilated, and even this annihilation does not matter! Because what exists after this annihilation of the "me" is what has always existed in phenomenality: LOVE, the objective expression of the absolute Subject.

LOVE OF ONESELF AS UNICITY

How does this LOVE express itself phenomenally? It is on this point that there is some misconception regarding such expression of LOVE (or COMPASSION) by Totality through body-mind organisms in which enlightenment has occurred. What really happens is that whatever the acts that take place through the concerned body-mind mechanism, the pervading understanding is that IT DOES NOT MATTER to the particular body-mind mechanism in the absence of the "me." Of course, some of these acts could raise doubts in the minds of others (not "others" to the jnani) until understanding happens, but the jnani is not concerned with such actions and reactions of the characters in the dream.

In other words, the awakening brings about the depth of the ocean. It does not necessarily stop the arising of the waves and the froth. (pp.68-72.)

LETTERS FROM RAMESH

**RAMESH S. BALSEKAR
PRIVATELY PUBLISHED
JULY 1990**

At the annual Kovalam Beach retreat, Ramesh has prepared for the attendants a number of essays elucidating points that may have been particularly difficult for some of them. Subsequently, copies of these essays have been included with letters to some correspondents. PART TWO: ENCLOSURES, briefly illustrates this aspect of correspondence in the Guru-disciple relationship by presenting parts of three such enclosures that have been sent to correspondents during the first half of 1990. (pp. 6-7)

PART TWO: ENCLOSURES

THE GURU-DISCIPLE RELATIONSHIP

"The Grace of the Guru." This concept, this phrase, has created considerable confusion in the minds of seekers because the words have never been clearly defined, and thus lead to different interpretations.

The very necessity of a Guru and the existence of the guru-disciple relationship arises only from the viewpoint of the disciple who cannot help seeing things from the standpoint of duality. And the problem for him will remain unsolved so long as his seeking continues on the basis of an individual seeking something through the help and "grace" of another individual called a Guru. The problem can only be dissolved when there is the realization that the apparent individual human being, seeking another apparent individual human being as a guru, in order to achieve an apparent state of being, is only a part of the impersonal functioning of the totality of manifestation. It is not seeing the matter in this perspective that causes all the terrible misery for the individual seeker who thinks that the seeking is his personal choice and that the success of the quest will depend upon his own efforts to achieve the grace of the Guru.

In response to a direct question: "What is the Grace of the Guru?", Ramana Maharshi has given an answer: "The Guru is both outer and inner. From outside he gives a push to the mind to turn inward while from inside he pulls the mind towards the Self and helps in quieting it - this is the Grace of the Guru. There is no difference between God, Guru and Self."

The Guru's grace manifests itself concretely in the form of spiritual instruction or upadesa, which literally means "restoration to the proper place": healing of the split mind of the individual - split into subject and object, "me" and the "other" - into the original wholeness and holiness of the primal state of pure being. When consciousness identifies itself with the individual psychosomatic organism as an independent entity with the rest of the world as his object, it separates itself from the primal state of pure being, the Self without any split as subject/object, the state which is described in the Hindu scriptures as Sat-chit-ananda (Being-Consciousness-Bliss) in which there is only being without any conceptualizing.

It is the Guru's grace that brings about the transformation into the awareness that life means living in continual change, and that the fear of change and uncertainty arises only because of the separation of the individual "me" from the rest of the universe; and that, therefore, this futile chase after pleasure and security can end only with the realization that the individual self as the "me" is merely an illusion and not a concrete entity with independence of action; and finally, that all there is is the Self or God or Consciousness.

THE BASIS OF TRUE UNDERSTANDING

It is extremely difficult for any ordinary man to grasp the fact that nothing more than a deep understanding, an unshakable conviction, of one's true nature is all that is necessary for the transformation to take place. It has been man's conditioning from the earliest day of his life that it is only personal effort that can bring him anything in life: even as a baby he had to cry before his hunger was satisfied. And now he is told that understanding is all that is necessary and, what is more, that any effort by a "me" could well be counterproductive. This seems incredible, quite unacceptable. But the fact of the matter is that an individual is merely an appearance in Consciousness, and as such cannot have any existence as an independent entity which can either be under bondage or be liberated therefrom.

The wise man is convinced, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that he cannot control the results or consequences of his actions because they form part of the total actions taking place in Totality. All that he can do is to concentrate his attention - his working mind - on the work at hand, with the result that such work, done to the best of his ability, without being hampered by the thinking, conceptualizing, worrying mind, will naturally be - at its best-performed with much less physical effort and almost no nervous strain. It is for this reason that the first overpowering effect of the happening known as "awakening" or "reintegration" or "transformation" or "metanoesis" or "paravritti" brought about by the non-volitional living, is the incredible sense of total freedom - freedom from the chains of personal doership: worry, anxiety, tension. All action becomes a natural, spontaneous part of the totality of action in the present moment, subject to the overall force of causality, subject to the interconnectedness of events and forces, totally beyond the comprehension of mere man.

ATTACHMENT TO SENSE-OBJECTS

It is difficult for an ordinary person to understand and appreciate the subtle but nonetheless significant difference between enjoyment of sensual pleasures and the attachment to sensual pleasures. It is not that, after enlightenment, the body-mind organism ceases to enjoy sensual pleasures. The difference between the sage and the ordinary person in regard to the enjoyment of sensual pleasures is that while the ordinary person is continually in search of such pleasures, the sage does not hanker after such pleasures but enjoys them with zest when they happen in the ordinary course of life. The sage does not seek pleasure, nor does he reject it when it happens. In other words, he does not deliberately discriminate between the acceptable and the unacceptable: he is open to both in the ordinary course of daily life. When there is choice, the body-mind organism continues to choose according to the circumstances, according to its natural characteristics and tendencies, without thinking in terms of good and bad.

The word "kritartha" is a combination of two words, "action" and "understanding," meaning "understanding in action." It refers to the kind of understanding that is not merely at the intellectual level (which still leaves the question, "Having understood, how do I now act henceforth?") but at the much deeper intuitive level where the understanding has transformed itself naturally into spontaneous action. Such intuitive apprehension is of a dimension totally apart from the ordinary intellectual comprehension. Such intuitive apprehension - apperception - means sudden transformation in perspective, a seeing within instead of without, a metanoesis, a paravritti, not seeing by a "me" with a split-mind of subject/object, but the impersonal seeing of the manifestation without the comparing and judging by the "me. "

It is such understanding which has transformed itself into spontaneous action in daily life which permits the body-mind organism of the sage to enjoy the sense objects in an uninhibited manner, without being attached to those sense objects – a state of mind far beyond the immature intellect of most seekers who would consequently prefer to doubt the sageness of the sage who enjoys the sense objects even though he is not attached to them. Thus the sage Ashtavakra says:

"Absence of attachment (not enjoyment to be eschewed) to sense-objects is liberation; passion for sense-objects is bondage. Understand this fact, and then do as you please."

"Apperception of this Truth seems to render an eloquent, wise and active person mute, dull and inactive. Knowledge of Truth does not therefore appear attractive to those who still want to enjoy the pleasures of this world."

These two verses are often taken as an injunction but, taken together, they actually constitute a mere statement of the fact of the evolutionary process. The confusion arises because of the words "do as you please". That the individual human being truly does not have any volition or choice of decision and action, will not generally be accepted until it is so learned through experience. Lord Krishna uses the same words "do as you please" when he tells Arjuna in the concluding chapter of the BHAGAVAD-GITA, "I have thus declared to you the Truth, the deepest of all secrets; meditate on it, and then do as you please". What it really means is that the declaration of the Truth has happened as part of the functioning of Totality. The reaction to this declaration of Truth by those who listen to it will also be part of the functioning of Totality. Perhaps in many cases, the listener will not be interested in the Truth if he still wants to enjoy the pleasures of this world. In some other cases, it will be taken as a challenge and these seekers will be involved in efforts to control and suppress their senses through various disciplines, and perhaps encounter considerable confusion and frustration. But certainly in at least a few cases, where the intellect happens to be satvic and mature, the real meaning of the words will be deeply impressed and the understanding itself will be transformed into spontaneous correct action without any sense of personal doership. It is all a matter of the process of evolution in the impersonal functioning of Totality. It is the understanding itself in action that ultimately brings about a letting-go, a smooth "going with the flow," a sense of tremendous freedom: enlightenment.

Sudden enlightenment does produce a certain change in outlook and perception for the individual body-mind organism, particularly in the interim period between what a Taoist Master terms as "enlightenment" and "deliverance." Even after enlightenment happens, the individual must necessarily continue to function as a separate body-mind organism

during the remainder of its span of life. By and large, the individual will continue to live as he did before, the organism enjoying the things according to its natural characteristics and inclinations - but it is not at all unlikely that his zest for pleasure may dwindle as his attachment to sense objects decreases rapidly. He may be found enjoying his solitude more than he did before. The most important change would be that while the individual continues to live more or less as before, there is no longer any personal involvement in anything that happens. An event would have an immediate reaction according to the natural characteristics and tendencies of the body-mind organism, but it would be very much on the surface, like a gentle wave on the surface of the ocean. Whatever happens through any body-mind organism - his one or some other organism - is merely witnessed without any personal involvement, without judging. (pp. 45-54.)

CONSCIOUSNESS WRITES

**RAMESH S. BALSEKAR
PRIVATELY PUBLISHED
DECEMBER 1994**

[TAKEN FROM THE EDITOR'S NOTE]

During the Kovalam Beach Seminar of 1993, copies of the then current edition of Consciousness writes were distributed to those in attendance. Later in that same year a draft of a much longer version of the book was prepared for translation into German, and in 1994 it was published in Germany under the title of Erleuchtende Briefe. Shortly thereafter, as a result of a series of extraordinary events, another edition evolved that contained much new material that had not appeared in the earlier editions, and the idea occurred to make this available to those who would be attending the 1995 Seminar.

During the preparation of this edition it became apparent that three major themes were developing. The first was the emphasis placed on showing the complete "humanness" of Ramesh. He is certainly a very exceptional human being, having qualities worthy of the greatest admiration. But the idea of taking him to be something of a deity with supernatural powers indicates a lack of understanding of what the True Guru really is.

Awakening has happened in the body-minds of several of Ramesh's correspondents, some in this year of 1994. Consideration of the nature of such transformations as described by both the Guru and his disciples is the second theme.

And third, this time considerably more material is presented concerning what Ramesh's correspondents have to say about the Teaching and its effect on their lives, with particular attention given to what they perceive as special difficulties experienced in their attempts to put the Teaching into practice. Such accounts can indeed be of help to the serious seeker, not only by telling of real-life experiences to which he can relate, but also by illustrating the fact that it is not only in the form of the Guru, but it is also in the form of the disciple that CONSCIOUSNESS WRITES.

CONSCIOUSNESS WRITES

**RAMESH S. BALSEKAR
PRIVATELY PUBLISHED
APRIL 1996**

[TAKEN FROM AN ADDENDUM, pp. 111-122]

TRANSCRIPT OF VIDEO TAPE: JANUARY 5, 1996

ELKE: As I was sitting there listening to Ramesh's talk [on the 28th of December, 1995], I suddenly felt this excitement within myself. Every word of his went deep into my being. A lot of energy arose, and suddenly, it was like an explosion, when I deeply understood that the seeker just doesn't exist. I realized with absolute clarity and total conviction that seeking just happens. There is no one. There is no seeker. And there is nothing to seek. There was nothing to look or seek for anymore. The sheer thought of the thing called "enlightenment" made me laugh so hard, because I realized that there is no such thing as enlightenment. The idea of - or the word - "enlightenment" is just a concept. The "me" which wants to get enlightened just doesn't exist.

The understanding of it all was so simple and so ordinary and normal. There was nothing special about it. Rather, it was the most normal thing. And I realized that the whole search was just a big joke. It is the most incredible joke that we are looking for something which cannot be found. The search just happens. And so does the moment in which it just drops.

I don't like the word "enlightenment" much, first of all because it is a concept. People have the idea that enlightenment is something big and extraordinary. They believe that it is otherworldly, maybe guns exploding and bells ringing. But it is just a very simple thing. A feeling of freedom and peace and ecstasy came over me. That feeling of freedom and peace has remained. The feeling of ecstasy was needed as a kind of push to make this understanding total and final.

Of course, the feeling of ecstasy isn't there anymore, but the absolute clarity remains that I am not the doer. There is no doer. God is everything. Whatever happens is OK, and whatever doesn't happen is OK, too. I feel totally relieved. My life doesn't seem to have changed. I am still the same person, but with a different attitude. I feel totally at peace. Whatever God plans, I am ready to accept. That gives me a sense of deep trust. Not really a trust in life - rather, just a trust and love, which aren't directed toward any particular thing.

Everything is the way it is. It's easy, it's simple. I am sure life will not be simple at all times, but there is no fear in me. I don't care about what will come in the future. I don't care if what happened will last or not. Whatever will happen will be OK.

There is no object. Everything is part of Totality or God. No fear exists anymore. All and everything is accepted as the will of God. Nothing can happen to "me." All is trust. OK, I can break my leg, so what? Deep within there is just trust, trust, trust. No doer exists whatsoever. The seeking is impersonally happening on its own as part of the functioning of Totality.

Seeking means that Consciousness is seeking as an identified, imaginary "me"-entity. At the moment when seeking stops, that "me" ceases to exist, and that's why the search ends. With that instant of realization, an indescribable relief occurs. It is the relief from the compulsion to seek.

The freedom is from seeking. What is, is. One cannot manipulate "What-Is." That is why I say it is so simple. Even if this understanding would disappear again, it wouldn't matter to me at all. I don't notice any clinging whatsoever.

Now I see myself sitting at the bank of the river of life, just peacefully, and without involvement, watching whatever floats by.

Before visiting Ramesh this time, I knew intuitively that something would happen. Don't ask me how I came to know of this presentiment. I can't give you any explanation. I just knew. But I didn't expect it to happen on the very first day of my visit.

Now there is the feeling of relief and freedom and peace, and acceptance of oneself and others. The judging stops. And there is a feeling of love towards everything and everybody, no matter what somebody else does or says. Acceptance and love for what is, as it is.

There is no way for me to explain the details and mechanics of what happened. But I know intuitively that the presence of Ramesh was needed in my case, on that morning of the 28th of December, 1995.

I never got much out of reading his books. I understand intellectually what Ramesh explained in them, but this body-mind organism was rather programmed to benefit more favorably from his presence - through the spoken word of Ramesh.

I really don't know why and how it happened. But I know with absolute certainty that it needed his presence, and the spoken word. There was the need for Ramesh's physical form.

When I met Ramesh the last time - in India at the Kovalam Beach seminar in March, 1995 - I had already decided then that I would visit Ramesh in Bombay during the coming winter. I had to. It was my destiny to visit him here in Bombay. I had the intuitional presentiment that something would come to happen during this visit. And it surely did!

"Something" is the wrong word, because nothing actually happened. But in order to describe what happened, I have to use these words.

I had plenty of experiences. When the experience ends, desire for more of it arises. And that wanting is volitional doing by a "me"-entity.

Here something of a different nature happened. It is not to be compared with any experience. It is something which has rather the quality of "is"-ness, existence or being, and it is eternal, outside of time. The fleeting feeling which arises after an experience - when the mind wants to make the time and movement stop, with the intention of clinging to the beautiful experience (which has already become part of the past) - is not there.

I believe that therapy supports the establishment of a healthy ego. In my own case, I used to have a lot of trouble and problems with myself. At that time, I wasn't even thinking of enlightenment. I underwent therapy to get out of my misery, and to attain some mental peace. On that level, therapy definitely can help one to enjoy life more.

I remember when I came to the dead-end of therapeutical work. I told the therapist that I see and enjoy the sunset, but still it was lacking something. The therapist told me that my described perception was just a feeling that would go away in due course.

But later on I realized that instead of something missing, actually something was too much present at those beautiful moments of sunset. It was the thinking mind which was intruding and spoiling the purity of the sunset, saying, "That sunset is beautiful." Somehow I knew intuitively that there was something more, or rather less, to an experience of a sunset.

If it was my destiny to undergo therapy, and the therapy helped me to solve my problems and made me enlightened, then all of that was predestined in the totality of the scheme of things. In this context, there is no question of cause and effect.

Also it was my destiny to meet Henning, who later became my husband. Through him the therapy process got started, and the search began. First my seeking was done for me through his body-mind mechanism. He was the one who was actively engaged in seeking for enlightenment. As his wife, I was a mere bystander for some time. I accompanied him wherever he went, and became a "silent" and passive seeker to begin with.

From my side, the relationship [with Ramesh] began with non-acceptance. I just couldn't accept him as a guru. I even had doubts about his enlightenment.

But despite my resistance, a certain understanding developed immediately. The very first time I heard Ramesh talking, I was convinced beyond the slightest doubt that the "me" could not become enlightened because it doesn't exist.

This understanding went deep beyond the intellect. In spite of my resistance, I knew I got something out of that meeting with him.

Then, at the Kovalam Seminar in 1995, all of a sudden this immense love for the Guru surfaced. The love wasn't directed towards Ramesh as a person - rather it was love for the Guru. For the first time I could accept, without any reservations, whatever he was saying. And now, love and gratitude towards my Guru are present in this body-mind organism. But it is impersonal love. Towards Henning, my husband, the love seems to be more of a personal nature. With Ramesh, there is just love, without attachment.

To be honest, I would prefer that Henning be enlightened, because he has the ability to talk and express himself eloquently in public. He is a very fine teacher.

For me, enlightenment happens. It doesn't matter through which body-mind organism it happens. The important thing is that it happens, And even that is not important. Enlightenment has no meaning. That is why it is nothing special.

I didn't do anything in order to get it. It is purely by grace. It just so happened. That's why no pride arises. It just is.

I must state, that nothing happened. Absolutely nothing happened. And I am not enlightened, of course.

[For seekers] I can only repeat what Ramesh is saying every day: Just go on doing what you have been doing so far. If a change is necessary, it will come - if it is so destined. It doesn't make sense to tell people to stop the search, because they can't. If questions come up, they want answers. And even if 10,000 questions arise, let them arise. And if there is need, ask them and get them answered. The questioner and the question are of, by and from the same and one Consciousness.

Yes, I would say to the seeker, "OK, hang in there, and keep doing whatever you feel you need to do."

Questions will arise as long as they will arise because it is so destined. Nothing needs to be changed. The arising of questions will be accepted, if that acceptance is destined to happen. Without any trace of doubt, I can say that whatever comes is part of one's destiny, including acceptance and non-acceptance. It is part of God's will.

The total understanding is a gift. It is grace. That's why it is nothing to be proud of. It is the most ordinary and simple and normal thing.

From my own experience, I can say with authority that the body-mind mechanism stays absolutely the same as before realization, at least so far. I am walking the same way. I am talking the same way. Nothing has changed in my behavior so far, a week after the experience.

This morning, I realized that I want to talk about the experience and share it with friends, if they want to listen to what I have to say. I don't care if they agree with what I say or not. This interview turns out to be my first try.

I feel lots of love towards seekers. I feel so much gratitude towards Ramesh. And I want to thank him for sharing his living room with so many seekers from all over the world.

CONSCIOUSNESS WRITES

**RAMESH S. BALSEKAR
PRIVATELY PUBLISHED
MAY 2000**

Concerning his apparent work overload, Ramesh replied to a solicitous correspondent:

"I was touched by your concern that I should not overtax myself on your account. There is really no choice, my dear friend. Everything happens so spontaneously. Actually, after I started this letter, I received a letter from the leader of the German group saying that several members of the group had unsuccessfully tried to get hold of the 'Eleven Verses To Sri Arunachala' to which I had referred in one of my later talks at the [Kovalam]

retreat, and would I please send him a copy so that he could have copies made for each member of the group? So I stopped this letter at the end of page 2, copied out the eleven verses from The Collected Works of Ramana Maharshi, and sent them out with a letter to him." (pp. 43-44)

FROM RAMESH TO MARC

January 3, 1994

I shall have my seminar at Kovalam Beach from the 5th to the 19th of February 1994. I think about 50 people are expected. I have stopped my tours abroad - each year it was more of a strain, and I am not getting younger every year! (p. 66)

FROM RAMESH TO MARGARETE

April 13, 1994

I must tell you that I was most impressed by your attitude at the seminar - quiet and utterly sincere. It was obvious too that the understanding was reaching you very amply, and I was happy. (p. 69)

FROM MARGARETE TO RAMESH

May 5, 1994

Since the seminar in Kovalam my mind is always working with you and your teaching. I have got all the videos and play them in two of my meditation groups and during and after the videos we talk about it together.

I see and hear you, translate and see and hear the understanding growing in my friends, and once more there is joy and happiness (p. 71)

May 6, 1994

I remember one situation during the seminar at Kovalam, when Elke was telling so spontaneously and deeply moved about her being like a puppet on a string. It just was there, and her words immediately became experience for me, and I was deeply touched by this love, gratitude and relief that she expressed. (p. 72)

FROM RAMESH TO CLARK

May 2, 1990

I returned from Kovalam Beach on Saturday, April 21. It was a very good retreat: the group, about ten to twelve Germans and about ten to twelve Americans, was excellent. It was very enjoyable, but strenuous: 25 talks and 25 personal interviews in less than two weeks. (p. 86)

FROM MARTIN TO RAMESH

April 28, 1990

I want to thank you for your kind attention and grace during the stay at Kovalam Beach. It was a momentous occasion for me, and one which has profoundly affected my life. On the last leg of the flight home, I experienced a separation from the body coupled with a sensation of great peace. The body seemed to respond spontaneously on its own. Since then, I have felt your presence regularly but intermittently. (p. 106)

FROM RAMESH TO ARESS

June 12, 1991

I am glad you enjoyed the Maui retreat. I did too. It was just the change I needed to recover my health. (p. 126)

ERLEUCHTENDE BRIEFE

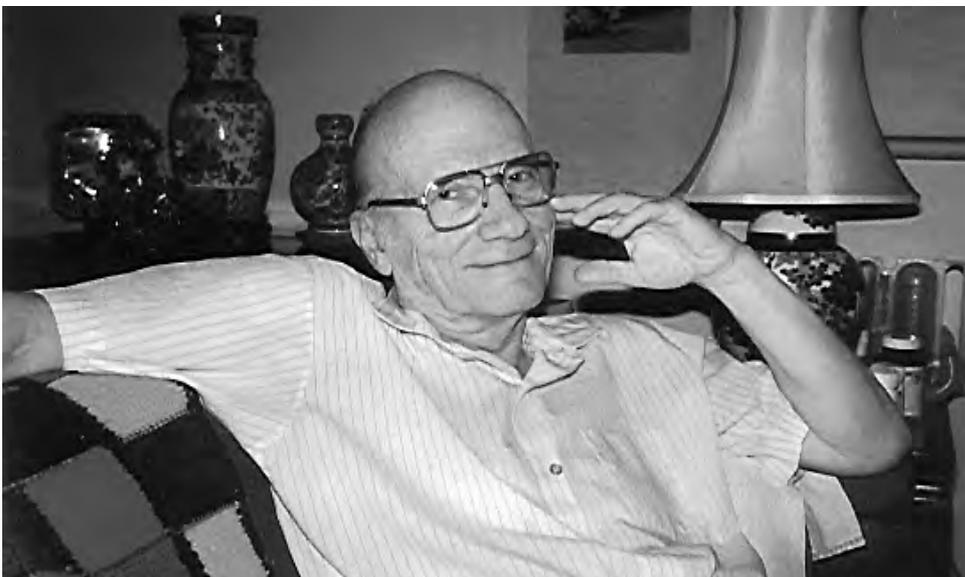
RAMESH S. BALSEKAR
FREIBURG, GERMANY: VERLAG ALF LÜCHOW
1994

"Und ganz offensichtlich macht es Ramesh Spaß, in seinen Briefen von den Ereignissen unter seinen deutschen Schülern zu berichten, besonders vom Seminar in Kovalam Beach. Ramesh hat, zusätzlich zu der generellen LIEBE des Guru für jeden seiner Schüler, eine spezielle Affinität für die 'Deutsche Gruppe'. (p. 13)

["Ramesh obviously enjoys telling in his letters about what's happening amongst the German disciples, and most of all about the seminar in Kovalam Beach. In addition to the general LOVE of the Guru for each of his disciples, Ramesh seems to have a special affinity for 'the German Group.'"]



BEN, RAMESH AND RIFKA IN JOSHUA 1987



BEN 1995

CONSCIOUSNESS IS ALL THERE IS

I think the big difference

- the quantum leap -

is the spontaneous feeling

"Consciousness is all there is,"

not I am That,

nor I am in the I-am-ness,

nor anything else. (p.135)

The question then arises: What then is to be done? This can only be answered by a counter question: to be done by whom?! All there is, is Consciousness, and the "human being" is merely one object in the inconceivably fantastic manifestation, and its impersonal self-generated functioning. If there is only the impersonal manifestation and its self-generated functioning, the one simple fact that stands out is that the human being as a separate entity is merely a concept, an illusion. And a mere concept or illusion cannot possibly have any duty or responsibility, any guilt or remorse to suffer from - precisely like the character in a personal dream whose antics can only be witnessed and can never be interfered with. Such an acceptance is tantamount to a tremendous sense of freedom or relief, and the supreme Truth is that it is not an object to be achieved by the illusory human being by any kind of illusory effort. (pp. 135- 136)

Really and truly, not a thing is, not a thing that can be sensorially perceptible and mentally conceivable. **All there is, is Consciousness**, unaware of itself as unmanifest and aware of itself only with the first thought or concept I AM. (p. 85)

It is not the human being who "possesses" a "higher consciousness", but **it is indeed this very CONSCIOUSNESS which is suffusing all form in the universe**, which possesses all human forms as instruments through which it functions as life and living. (p. 116)

Finally, the basic fact remains that **all there is, is Consciousness** - and the dream within it, and "we" are all dreamed characters in that dream. (p. 130)

DO WHATEVER YOU LIKE

Above, on page 66, Ramesh quotes the sage Ashtavakra: "Absence of attachment (not enjoyment to be eschewed) to sense-objects is liberation; passion for sense-objects is bondage. Understand this fact, and then do as you please."

Also on page 66: "Lord Krishna uses the same words 'do as you please'".

When he tells Arjuna in the concluding chapter of the BHAGAVAD-GITA, "I have thus declared to you the Truth, the deepest of all secrets; meditate on it, and then do as you please". Where the intellect tends to be satvic and mature, the real meaning of the words will be deeply impressed and the understanding itself will be transformed into spontaneous correct action without any sense of personal doership.

It is the understanding itself in action that ultimately brings about a letting-go, a smooth 'going with the flow,' a sense of tremendous freedom: enlightenment.

On page 60 Ramesh writes: "Ramakrishna Paramahansa was once asked, '... tell me how I should live."

"The answer was amazingly simple. He said, 'Have the true conviction that you are merely a machine operated upon by God. And then you may do whatever you like."

On page 53 Ramesh says: "Once there is a clear understanding - that there really is no personal volition - you may do whatever you like."

In Consciousness Writes (May 2000) he writes: "It is not easy to forget the persistent query, 'I understand, but having understood, what do I do?!' The answer is: do whatever you feel like doing - live as if you were enlightened. And then suddenly there is the answer that life goes on precisely as it is supposed to, irrespective of what the illusory individual thinks 'he' is doing!!" (p. 11)

Similar expressions of Truth have occurred independently among mystics in various times and places. The classic example of this in the West is St. Augustine, who said, "Love, and do what you like."

"Saint Augustine's maxim, Dilige et quod vis fac, - if you but love [God], you may do as you incline - is morally one of the profoundest of observations."(James, 1982, p. 80)

"As the Bhagavad Gita says, only those need renounce worldly actions who are still inwardly attached thereto. If one be really unattached to the fruits of action, one may mix in the world with equanimity. I quoted ...Saint Augustine's saying: "If you only love God enough, you may safely follow all your inclinations." (James, 1982, p.361)

"To have arrived at this [detachment of the mystic] is to have escaped from the tyranny of selfhood: to be initiated into the purer air of that universe which knows but one rule of action - that which was laid down once for all by St. Augustine when he said, in the most memorable and misquoted of epigrams: 'Love, and do what you like.'" (Underhill, 1999, p. 216)

EPILOGUE

FROM HEINER TO A FRIEND

July 15, 2001

It's been three weeks since the Seminars here in Gutsweg finished, and I've had a good rest and life is returning to life without a Seminar.

For me it was quite emotional to finish what I have been doing for 14 years, arranging Seminars for Ramesh. It has certainly ruled most of my life during these years, and everything else had to kind of fit around it, and there was nothing I would have liked more to do. Something else has to fill that gap now. Ramesh has suggested that people like me should not run idle and have time to spin concepts, and that I write down my lifestory. At first I didn't like the idea, but then thinking about all the crazy and intense happenings that have occurred since I was born, I have started to take to the idea, and have now to see if it works.

By now you should have received a copy of The Ultimate Understanding, Ramesh's legacy, and what a beautiful legacy. Respect and admiration for the author, editor and publisher. And don't forget, it was all done in India! Ramesh is very fond of the book and when I was there in February I saw how much work and care he put into it. Everybody in the team working for the Seminar got a copy with a dedication from Ramesh. I'd like to tell you what Ramesh has written in my copy, because I know that I will not invite uneasy feelings or be thought of as showing off, but it just makes me feel so full and soft:

"To Heiner, dear Heiner, the dearest treasure the Teaching has given me."

It also made me finally realize what I really mean to him. Somehow I knew but I could not accept it, and now without any cringing I can see how much he needed me and what I have done for him. Until then I could only see what he meant to me, what was coming from him, HIM. Now my relationship with him for the first time feels complete. Behind the corner is lurking the Truth, that all is one event, that we are both the same, the One Source, Consciousness, GOD.

On my visit in February, one morning after tea, around seven, Ramesh sat down in his rocking chair in the bedroom and jotted down in 10-15 minutes his letter to God (which is presented at the end of The Ultimate Understanding) and gave it to me, saying, "Have a look." I was moved to tears and for me it's the most wonderful piece he has ever written.

A few days ago Roger from the Rockholm Hotel in Kovalam Beach rang to say that he had finished with the charters and was again open to normal business. It didn't take long for the thought to arrive: "Why not have another seminar in Kovalam?" I rang Ramesh and he said exactly the same thing. We would have a maximum of 100 people, nine days with one day break, with Ramesh giving one talk in the morning. I'm waiting for Roger's reply to my enquiry. It would just be wonderful to finally return after 14 years to where it all started. Maybe you can produce something from your many scripts that we would print and give out to the participants as usual. But first let's see if it materializes. If you

don't feel the urge to write, don't. That is what I like about our relationship. We talk or write very little, but when we talk or write there is this immediate bond, this closeness.

FROM HEINER TO RAMESH

July 16, 2001

" For Heiner, dear Heiner,
the dearest treasure the Teaching has given me."

Of course you know that it made me very happy to read that dedication in my copy of The Ultimate Understanding, but something else has been set in motion through those words: a process in which I realized and started to accept the role I have played in Your life, what I always meant to You, where You needed me. Until then I had only seen what you meant to me. I could never accept being an equal part of these events, the two sides of a coin. Your saying things like: "Yes, I'd like to come and see Your house in Schermau," were always interpreted to mean that you came for the Seminar, that you came for something more important.

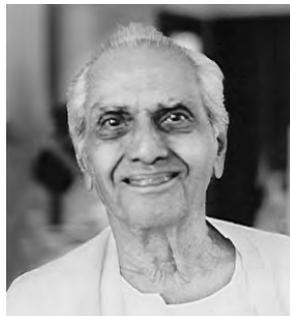
Mary's reply to this point was very helpful and beautiful: "Yes, I can understand why Ramesh would write in the book that you are the dearest treasure that the Teaching has given him. He gained a Western son. You have been there to intercede between him and the "students" who came to see him and who would have eaten him alive if there weren't those to protect him. And you loved him as a Guru and a father. When I think of the drama created by those around him, then Your love and steadiness must feel like a balm and a blessing. I'm so glad that he expressed this to You, Heiner."

My relationship with You feels more complete than ever. The relationship that is the same side of the coin. Just one event with different characters.

My Father and I are One.

So, I received the greatest treasure of all treasures and in the process was turned into the dearest treasure.

THANK YOU GURU



FROM RAMESH TO GOD

Dear God,

This is my record of eternal gratitude to You.

You gave me birth in a most respected Hindu family, but not high enough in social status to make me proud.

You gave me a physical form well-admired for its perfection, but it was small enough to keep me humble.

You gave me education high enough to be most useful in life, but not high enough to make me proud.

You gave me success in sports high enough to be satisfied, but not proud.

You gave me a career in which You took me high enough to be admired, but not high enough to make me arrogant.

You gave me a wife and family for which I have always been eternally grateful, but You did not spare me some grief to remind me not to forget what life is all about, and to be always grateful for what I do have.

You did not forget to place an adequate number of temptations in my way so that I may not be too critical of others who have to face their own temptations.

I am now 84, and perhaps the only wish is that the long life You have given me will not carry a burden at the end. But in that case, I know You will also give me the necessary courage to go with it.

You gave me a lot to show me how little is needed to be content and how much could be given away.

And, undoubtedly, the most important of all - as if the bounty you have showered on me were not enough - You crowned your achievement by using this psychosomatic apparatus to convey to the world the most beautiful message of Advaita. Truly I am blessed. Or, indeed, my Beloved, have You not blessed Yourself?!

Finally, it occurs to me, if You were to design for Yourself a life in phenomenality, could it have been much different from this one? And, for this thought, no tears are enough to wash Your Noumenal feet.

Ramesh S. Balsekar

GLOSSARY

Advaita

Non-dualism; no otherness; the doctrine of monism which contends that only Consciousness has existence and all phenomenal existence is illusion.

Ashtavakra

The teenage Guru of King Janaka. Ramesh's book, A Duet Of One (Advaita Press, 1989) presents a dialogue between the two of them.

Bhagavad Gita

story of the Divine Guru, Krishna, and his royal disciple, Arjuna.

bhakta

Devotee.

bhakti

Devotion, adoration.

darshan

Viewing, seeing, meeting.

double-slit experiment

"... this experiment can be understood, in the first place, as a play of the uncertainty principle." See Goswami, 1993, pp. 66-73.

Goswami, Amit

Professor of physics at the university of Oregon.

Gospel of Thomas

One of the Gnostic Gospels. See Pagels, 1989, p. 129.

jiva

The individual soul; false identification with the body-mind; sense of doership; the ego.

jnana

Knowledge of the Self.

inani

One who has realized the Self, or, more accurately, body-mind in which Self-Realization has occurred.

Kovalam Beach

The site in Kerala State, South India, where Ramesh has held seminars of about two weeks in length, occurring sometime during February, March or April, in the years 1988, 1989, 1990, 1993, 1994 and 1995.

Lila

Play, sport; the cosmos looked upon as a divine play.

Maharaj

Nisargadatta, Maharaj, who died in 1981, was Ramesh's Guru.

mantra(m)

Incantation; an instrument of thought; ideal sounds; a word or group of words whose constant repetition brings about specific results, such as quieting the mind.

Maui

An island in the state of Hawaii, the site of Ramesh's annual seminar in the years 1991 and 1992.

Maya

Delusion; the veiling power, concealing the real and projecting the unreal.

Namaste

A greeting and sign of respect made by placing the palms of the hands together.

nirvana

Liberation; extinction of individual existence.

Ramana Maharshi

An Advaitic Guru who lived in southern India, and who died in 1950.

Sadguru

The True Spiritual Teacher; the Self.

sadhana

Spiritual practice.

samsara

The round of existence the passage of the soul in the cycle of births and deaths.

Sat-Chit-Ananda

Being-Consciousness-Bliss.

Satsang

Being in the Presence of Truth, Consciousness, the Guru.

Satvic

Adjectival form of sattva, often translated as "purity" or "harmony." So, satvic would mean "pure" or "harmonious."

Sufi

A member of an Islamic mystical sect.

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